

Media, Communication and Traditional Painting: Exploring Srimanta Sankaradeva's Visual Culture in the Context of Ecological Consciousness and Global Sustainability

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Abstract

The study 'Media, Communication & Traditional Painting: Exploring Srimanta Sankaradeva's Visual Culture in the context of Ecological Consciousness and Global Sustainability' investigates the interdisciplinary connection between traditional painting, visual communication, ecological consciousness and global sustainability in the context of the Srimanta Sankaradeva's cultural and artistic heritage. Sankaradeva was one of the key architects of the Neo-Vaishnavite revival of Assam and used visual culture to be a potent medium for imparting spiritual, ethical, social and cultural values. It explores the visual legacy of Sankaradeva, such as the illustrations written in his manuscripts, narrative images, performative visuality, symbolic motifs, and the art of the community, as communicative structures that articulate harmonies of human, natural and cosmic worlds. Inspired from the theories of visual culture, environmental humanities, cultural ecology and

media studies, the research is intended to rethink the traditional painting as not only an artform, but as a indigenous knowledge system which can provide inputs to the current ecological discourse, sustainability oriented communication (Neog, 1980).

This study is qualitative interdisciplinary which combines historical analysis, visual interpretation, iconographic analysis, textual investigation, and critical discourse analysis of the literary, artistic, and cultural sources. The results indicate that the visual culture of Sankaradeva contains messages of interconnections, co-existence, care of the environment, community responsibility, and cultural sustainability, which are very relevant to the current global issues of climate change, conservation of biodiversity and sustainable development. Finally, the research suggests that the traditional visual story has a potential for use in the context of cultural preservation, environmental communication and sustainability education in today's globalizing world. The study offers a new paradigm for the conservation and integration of indigenous artistic knowledge into international sustainability agendas, by placing it in the context of wider international strands of interest and discussion on ecological consciousness and sustainable futures. The research broadens the scope of the research in the field of visual culture and provides new approaches to art history, media and communication, environmental humanities and interdisciplinary sustainability research (Vatsyayan, 1983).

Keywords

Media, Communication, Traditional Painting, Srimanta Sankaradeva, Visual Culture, Ecological Consciousness, Global Sustainability

01. Introduction

One of the most important ways of knowledge production and transmission in human civilization is in the form of visual culture. In addition to their beauty, visual images are also means of holding collective memory, cultural identity, philosophical ideas, and social communication. In today's scholarship, visual culture has become an interdisciplinary branch of study which focuses on visual images and their influence on people's perception of society, nature, religion and daily living. In the Indian context, traditional art forms have been used as a medium to share moral principles, spiritual lessons, and social and cultural stories from one generation to the next.

The visual culture of the pioneer saint-scholar, social reformer and cultural architect Srimanta Sankaradeva (1449 CE-1568 CE) of Assam is a unique instance in which the role of the arts

as a medium of education, communication and community formation can be seen. Sankaradeva created the framework of a culture that remains an integral part of Assamese society and the artistic heritage through his artwork in the manuscripts, performative aesthetics, symbolic imagery and devotional visual traditions. (Neog, 1980)

The term "traditional painting" should by no means be interpreted as an aesthetic object; rather, it should be seen as a system of communication in which both the multi-layered contexts and the intercultural and interlingual dimension play a significant role. The visual narratives of the Neo-Vaishnavite traditions provide an understanding of the complex interconnections of spirituality, morality, social harmony and nature. These artforms convey ecological harmony, interdependency and coexistence via symbolic expression of plant and animal life, land and water forms and cosmological arrangements. These traditions are visual systems of indigenous knowledge which carry cultural experiences and environmental knowledge. Recent theories of the media and of communication have begun to recognize the potential of visual texts to create collective meaning, to influence behavior and to shape perceptions. Thus, the study of Sankaradeva's visual culture from the perspective of the media and communication studies offers a chance to re-imagine the traditional painting as a medium of cultural discourse which goes beyond its aesthetic realm and enters into the realm of environmental awareness, social education and sustainable living (Mitchell, 2005).

This is especially important in light of the current issues related to the environment. Climate change, biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and unsustainable pattern of development have created a concern globally, with respect to future of human societies and ecosystems. The difficulties have stimulated the research of scholars to come up with alternative modes of knowledge that can be used to build ecological awareness and sustainable worldview. In that sense, cultural heritage and traditional arts can be used to learn about human nature relationships which are not sufficiently incorporated in the conventional theories of development. A postmodern and interdisciplinary analysis of the visual culture of Sankaradeva shows its wealth of ecological values embedded in its cultural memory, moral sensibility and communal relationships. The aim of this study is to show that the indigenous visual heritage can make a valuable contribution to the discourse on global sustainability, and to link traditional painting with today's issues of sustainability, environmental communication and cultural resilience. It also suggests that the process of preservation, reinterpretation and dissemination of traditional visual culture is not only important to

sustain the cultural identity but for the development of environmentally responsible and sustainable futures as well (Vatsyayan, 1983).

02. Background of the Study

The history of Assam has left an indelible mark on its visual culture, which is a rich continuum of indigenous traditions, influenced by the historical, religious and socio-cultural context. Assam has developed a unique visual identity from its sculptural legacy of ancient Kamarupa to manuscript painting, ritual arts, textiles and performative traditions that are indicative of its cultural diversity. During the Neo-Vaishnavite Movement (1449–1568 CE) by Srimanta Sankaradeva, the mediums of art like Ankiya Naat, Bhaona, Illustrated Manuscripts, Masks and Symbolic Imagery were used as the means to communicate, educate and express spiritual emotions. These practices set a precedent for the visual dissemination and narration of culture in the area.

It is a legacy that has regained significance in the contemporary discourse, linking to indigenous ecological knowledge, cultural sustainability and aesthetic communicative skills, pertinent to current global issues of environmental degradation and cultural homogenization. Thus, the visual traditions of Sankaradeva offer a meaningful context to re-interpret the traditional art in the interdisciplinary modern perspectives of sustainability, communication and cultural resilience (Neog, 1980).

03. Review of Literature

1. The book “History of Assamese Literature” by Barua, B.K. (1953) discusses the evolution of Assamese literature and the changing course of the literature due to the influence of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement. He describes how Sankaradeva made religious knowledge accessible to the masses, and comes up with these ideas through the medium of popular language and imagery. The essay focuses on the literature and art works as a tool of mass communication in Assam in the medieval period. Barua highlights the importance of cultural symbols in the construction of the collective identity and contextualising the manuscript paintings in the process of socio-cultural developments.
2. Neog, M. One of the best and most authoritative works on Sri SriSankaradeva and Neo-Vaishnavism is “Sri SriSankaradeva” (1965). It covers all of Sankaradeva's literary, religious, dramatic, painting, music and social reform works. Neog speaks about manuscript illustrations, Bhaona traditions and Satra institutions as visual and communicative systems to create a meaning of the paintings of Sankaradeva, which he considers as a primary visual communication by showing the ecological and ethical orientations.

3. Vatsyayan, K. *Traditional Indian Theatre: Multiple Streams* (1980) looks at how the visual arts, performance, literature and ritual traditions are intertwined in India. She stresses upon the fact that the Indian art forms are a system of communication. This interdisciplinary approach is applicable to the cultural vision of Sankaradeva, since all four arts (painting, drama, music and literature) convey social and spiritual values.
4. Sarma, S. *A History of Assamese Literature* (1989) by S. Ramachary gives a comprehensive evaluation of the Assamese literature with particular reference to Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva. It emphasizes devotional literature, prayers (Ankiya Naat), poetry and visual culture of Satras. The author believes that the Neo-Vaishnavism developed a communication system of text, image, music and performance that will be useful in understanding paintings as multimodal text.
5. Mitchell, W. J. T. "Picture Theory," by Paul Stoll (1994), has been an impetus to create a theory of images as active agents in the formation of cultural meaning and social reality. He proposes the "pictorial turn" that takes into consideration visual culture as a form of discourse. This approach makes a lens through which to re-read the paintings of Sankaradeva, and also facilitates analysis of visual discourses in contemporary media.
6. The term visual culture, as described in *An Introduction to Visual Culture* by Mirzoeff, N., (1999) is defined as the study of the construction of meaning through images. He relates and associates the questions of visibility to identity, power and knowledge systems. The framework he has developed enables him to interpret the Assamese manuscript paintings as fluid cultural media that are associated with the environmental communication of the times.
7. Coomaraswamy, A. K. In his work titled 'Medieval Sinhalese Art' (1908), and further essays on Indian aesthetics, traditional Indian art is seen as a manifestation of spiritual expression, ethical and cosmological truths. He stresses on the harmony between nature and religion, and creativity, and provides an intellectual basis to understand that Sankaradeva's paintings convey ecological and moral messages.
8. *The Spirit of Indian Painting: Close Encounters with 101 Great Works*, by B. N. Goswamy, B. N. (2014), explores Indian painting in terms of symbolism, visual language and culture. He underscores that paintings as a medium of memory have been a repository of memory and offers methodological tools to analyse Assamese manuscript paintings in a heritage and sustainability discourse.
9. Morton, T. *The Ecological Thought* (2010) by talks about ecological awareness based on interconnectedness of all beings. He is opposed to anthropocentrism and embraces a

relational approach to nature. This assists in interpreting natural motifs in Sankaradeva's paintings in the context of an ecological expression.

10. Latour, B. *We Have Never Been Modern* (1993) by Latour and Mark Zuehlowsky, brings in the concept of Actor-Network Theory, focusing on networks between humans and non-humans. His ideas challenge the conventional interpretations of traditional paintings and enable a conceptualization of traditional knowledge within cultural-ecological networks, linking to the current field of sustainability thinking.
11. Research Area: Assamese Cultural Heritage Studies (Various Studies on Satras and Manuscript Paintings) explores the study of Chitra Bhagavata and Vaishnavite manuscripts on the aspects of visual symbolism, narration and ecological elements like river, forest and animals. The results of these studies illustrate the role of manuscript paintings as an educational medium and build the connections between traditional art and the discourse on sustainability.

04. Statement of the Problem

While there has been growing interest in the world at large in the study of visual culture, environmental humanities and sustainability studies, the visual heritage of Srimanta Sankaradeva has been largely limited to religious, historical, and cultural interpretations. The impact of its presence in influencing the current ecological awareness and helping to create a global conversation about sustainability has yet to be studied. While the study of visual traditions of Northeast India, especially Assam, mainly concentrates on the Neo-Vaishnavite art (manuscript painting, Bhaona, Satriya culture) and their relation with environment, media and sustainability perspectives, it is not a systematic and interdisciplinary approach.

Moreover, a lot of traditional visual narratives in the northeast India are symbolically linked to the environment and nature, which need to be critically discussed in the academic arena, but have been left out of such discussions. The majority of contemporary environmental communication research has focused on the modern systems of communication, with little attention paid to the indigenous visual systems, which also constitute another way of understanding the world, of living in ways that have environmental implications and that can promote ecological awareness and thinking towards sustainability.

Given the gap in the research, it is a need of the hour to critically re-think Sankaradeva's visual culture from an interdisciplinary perspective that brings together the fields of visual culture studies, ecological humanities, media communication and sustainability frameworks. Such an inquiry is crucial to shift the traditional regional visual heritage of Northeast India to the global academic

mainstream and to bring to focus the significance of such a heritage in today's context of environmental issues (Mirzoeff, 1999).

05. Rationale and Significance of the Study

The present study is “Media, Communication and Traditional Painting: Exploring Srimanta Sankaradeva’s Visual Culture in the context of Ecological Consciousness and Global Sustainability” because the need of culturally-informed approaches to sustainability is increasing, which go beyond merely technological and policy-driven solutions. The research aims to uncover the visual culture of Srimanta Sankaradeva as a manifestation of native ecological knowledge, human-nature ethics and values for the community that still resonate in the current environmental debates, while in an age of ecological devastation, climate change and traditional knowledge systems' erosion. The research discusses the traditional painting as a medium of visual communication, and shows the importance of the indigenous knowledge systems in maintaining the ecological consciousness and passing on sustainable cultural practices from one generation to the next.

The study is important because it opens up the interdisciplinary debate between art, media, communication, ecology and studies on sustainability and visual heritage to the global academic arena of environmental responsibility. Moreover, it illustrates ways in which the traditional visual narration can help to raise global environmental awareness by cultivating cultural sensitivity, ecological ethics and sustainable ways of thinking, providing alternative visions for the emergence of a more inclusive, culturally responsive global sustainability(*UNESCO, 2017*).

06. Objectives of

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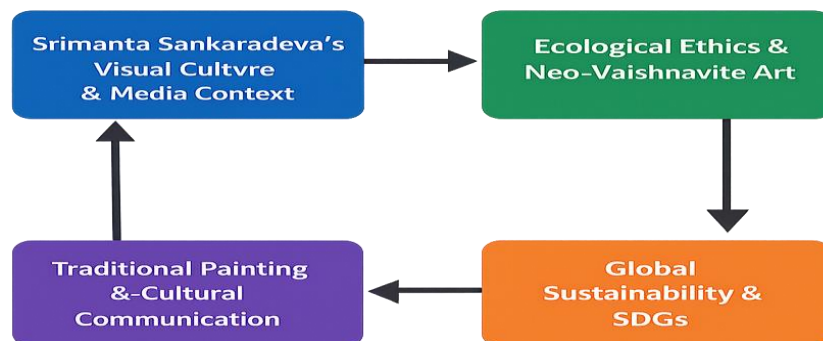
1. To exam
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practices in Assam.
2. To explore the representation of ecological consciousness, environmental ethics, and human nature relationships embedded in the traditional paintings and visual narratives of the Neo-Vaishnavite tradition.



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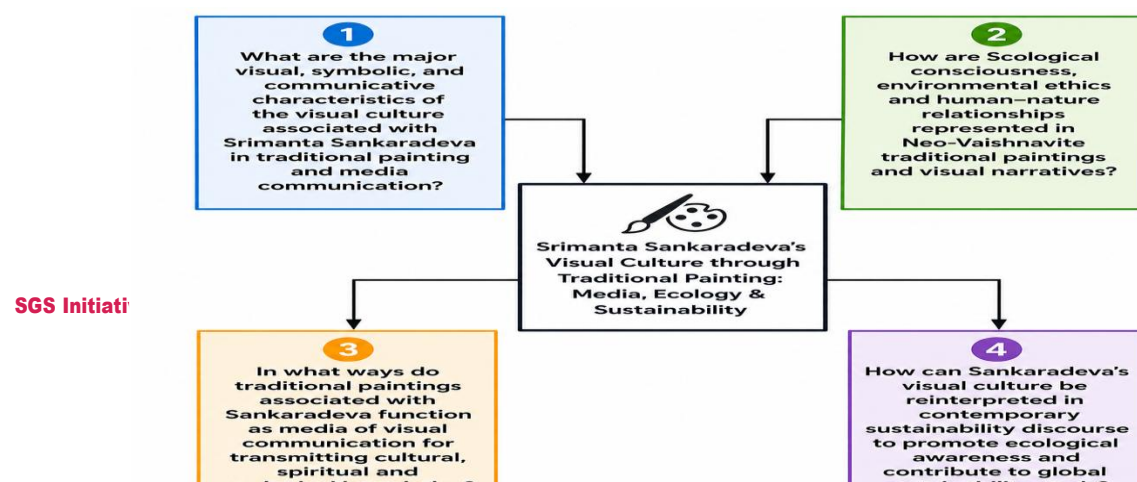
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traditional painting

3. To glorify the role of traditional painting as a medium of visual communication for the transmission of cultural, spiritual and ecological knowledge in Assamese society.
4. To assess the contemporary relevance of Sankaradeva's visual culture in promoting global sustainability discourse and advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through a postmodern interpretative perspective.



07. Research Questions

1. What are the major visual, symbolic, and communicative characteristics of the visual culture associated with Srimanta Sankaradeva within the context of traditional painting and media communication?
2. How are ecological consciousness, environmental ethics and human nature relationships represented in the traditional paintings and visual narratives of the Neo-Vaishnavite tradition?
3. In what ways do traditional paintings associated with Sankaradeva function as media of visual communication for transmitting cultural, spiritual and ecological knowledge?
4. How can Sankaradeva's visual culture be reinterpreted in contemporary sustainability discourse to promote ecological awareness and contribute to global sustainability goals?



08. Historical and Cultural Context

Historically and culturally, the program is situated in the context of rich artistic culture of Assam which has developed over the centuries due to various interactions of indigenous cultural practices, religious beliefs and the aesthetics of the region, in relation to the ecological consciousness and global sustainability. Assamese art has developed in a variety of forms such as temple sculpture, manuscript painting, ritual art and folk art which expressed its close ties with human communities and nature (Barua, 1969).

However, in the fifteenth and the sixteenth century, there was a remarkable change when Srimanta Sankaradeva, the founder of the Neo-Vaishnavite movement, brought about a tremendous cultural renaissance in Assam. This work of Sankaradeva's, contributed through his religious, literary and artistic creations, put in place a holistic visual culture of spirituality, education and communication. This movement fostered the development of manuscript paintings, religious texts with illustrations (Shri Krishna Nataka), Mukha Shilpa (mask) making and Ankiya Naat (theatrical performances) which became strong tools to spread ethic, cultural and ecological values among the masses (Neog, 1980). The creative techniques not only imparted the Assamese culture with rich identity but also also created a visual communication system that helped in maintaining and sharing the collective memory, social harmony, respect for nature, and community-based knowledge from generation to generation, which is highly pertinent in today's era of ecological awareness and sustainable development.

09. Research Gap

Although several studies have been conducted on Srimanta Sankaradeva, the culture of the Neo-Vaishnava and Satras, manuscript paintings, literary traditions, etc. there are still areas of research that are not covered. The religious, historical, aesthetic and literary aspects of Sankaradeva's works have been explored in most of the studies and only a few have taken up the ecological implications in the field of visual culture. Moreover, no research has critically correlated Sankaradeva's artistic and visual legacy to the current issues of consciousness toward ecology, ethics

of the environment and global sustainability. The traditional paintings are also under-researched in terms of media/ communication studies, which is especially the case with regards to their use as a visual communication system to pass on culture, environment and social values to the next generations. In this regard this study aims to fill the gaps by reconsidering the image culture of Sankaradeva from an interdisciplinary perspective of the visual communication, postmodern theory, environmental humanities and sustainability studies.

10. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical context of the present study is interdisciplinary, allowing a holistic perspective of the artistic heritage, culture and interactions with the environment in society. These theoretical frameworks offer ways of analyzing, understanding and approaching visual imagery, cultural connotations, the natural world and modern artistic practices.

i. Visual Culture Theory

Visual Culture theory explores the influence of image, symbol, object and visual culture on human perception and cultural identity. It encompasses more than just art, it is also the visual encounters in everyday life, the pictures that appear in the media and cultural objects. This theory can be used to understand the social messages, historical remembrances, and common identity conveyed in visual expressions in the domain of artistic heritage. It highlights how visual imagery is involved in creating cultural stories and the ability to pass on the heritage through generations.

ii. Semiotics and Iconography

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and their meaning in relation to a cultural context, Iconography is the interpretation of meaning of visual images or symbolic motifs. Such strategies are useful in deciphering the significance of paintings, sculptures, architectures and traditional forms of art. The semiotic and iconographic analysis can help in the decoding of the cultural symbols, religious images and visual stories that express the beliefs, customs, and experiences of a community.

iii. Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is the study of the connection between culture, art, and literature, and nature. It analyzes the natural imagery, meaning-making and values of cultural products. Ecov critical studies offer a tool for exploring the relationship between an artistic imagination and the landscapes of river, forest and ecological life. It emphasizes the interdependence of creativity and awareness with regard to the environment.

iv. Environmental Humanities

Environmental Humanities, which brings together the disciplines of history, culture, philosophy, literature and the arts, is an interdisciplinary approach to studying environmental issues. This approach acknowledges that environmental issues are both cultural and historical phenomena and not only a scientific issue. It fosters the analysis of community perception, representation and response to the environment in artistic and cultural forms, connecting the ecological with the human values and traditions of the community.

v. Cultural Ecology

Cultural Ecology is the study of the interrelatedness of human society and its environment. It investigates the changes in cultural practices, social institutions and artistic traditions to ecological conditions. This theoretical approach can be very helpful in comprehending the impacts of geographical aspects (rivers, forests, climate etc.) on settlement patterns, living standards, cultural heritage and art forms. It exemplifies the two way relationship between culture and environment through time.

vi. Sustainability Theory

The sustainable theory focuses on the various balance of environmental protection, social welfare and economic development for the present and future generations. In terms of art and culture, the theory encourages the conservation of traditional knowledge, cultural practices and artistic resources and sustainable development. It promotes the need for the preservation of both natural and cultural resources as a critical part of long-term community resiliency and ecological balance.

vii. Postmodern Theory

The postmodern Theory is a challenge to fix meanings, grand narratives, and universal interpretations of culture and history. It focuses on the plurality, diversity, hybridity and multiple perspectives of social and cultural experiences. The postmodern approach allows for the analysis of modern art forms, changing identity and other cultural narratives at the context of artworks in the present. It acknowledges the dynamic and fluid nature of culture and stimulates critical thinking related to the issues of representation, power and cultural change.

11. Research Methodology

The overall research methodology of the present study is multidisciplinary that includes historical, qualitative, visual and cultural research methods in studying artistic heritage, visual culture and the relationship between environment and cultural expressions. The methodology aims to make a detailed study of art traditions, symbolism and changes in social and cultural practices from various periods and regions in history possible.

i. Historical Research

Historical research is the basis that analyses and looks into the development and evolution of artistic traditions over time. Primary and secondary sources include archival documents, manuscripts, historical records, government reports, scholarly books and research articles, exhibition catalogues and visual archives are collected and examined using this approach. Analysis of the history of art practice can reveal its origins and continuity and its transformation, and can relate practice to other social, political, cultural and environmental factors. In this way, the study brings to life the historical context that is crucial for comprehending the artistic heritage and cultural identity.

ii. Qualitative Research

The study is mainly qualitative research method which is based on the interpretation of meanings, experience, culture values and symbolic expressions rather than numbers. Qualitative research can be used to explore artistic practice, cultural stories and perceptions of the environment in-depth. The data collection methods used are observation, interview, discussion, field notes and textual analysis. This method offers a nuanced understanding of ways that artists, communities and cultural institutions understand and preserve artistic practices in a changing socio-cultural landscape.

iii. Visual Analysis

Visual analysis used to analyse the formal and aesthetic attributes of artworks and visual representations. This approach is of compositional, colour, line, texture, form, space, perspective and stylistic elements. Visual analysis is a process of systematic observation and interpretation to determine artistic techniques, thematic concerns, and aesthetic values that are evident in paintings, sculptures, crafts, architecture and other visual media. The approach helps to elucidate the meanings of the visual language as well as historical experiences and experiences of the culture.

iv. Semiotic Analysis

The semiotic analysis is a method used to interpret meanings, symbols and signs that are found in visual and cultural phenomena. It is based on the theory of semiotics and aims at exploring the image, the motif, the colour, the object, the visual element as means of communication and bearer of messages and cultural values. Semiotic analysis can be used to uncover layers of meaning in the work of the artist and how the visual communication affects the social and cultural understanding. It is especially useful to analyze the symbolic images related to identity, environment, religion and collective memory.

v. Iconographic Analysis

The iconographic analysis is based on the identification and interpretation of the repeated image, motif, symbol and story elements in works of art. This approach explores the cultural,

religious, historical and social context of the meanings and associations of visual symbols. The study considers the iconographic elements and their representation and investigates their relationship to cultural beliefs, myths, traditions and perceptions of the environment. The technique also helps in identifying the continuity and changes in symbolic imagery from one period to another and one art form to another.

vi. Comparative Method

Comparative method is used to look for similarities; differences; continuities and changes in the artistic traditions; visual representations; cultural practices and environmental influences. Analysis can be done historically, geographically, by style, and/or by culture. This way some patterns of cultural interaction, adaptation and transformation can be uncovered and a wider picture of the evolution of artistic heritage and visual culture can be gleaned. It also enables the assessment of uniqueness of a region in a larger cultural context.

vii. Ethnographic Documentation

Ethnographic documentation is used to document and interpret the cultural practices, art forms and knowledge systems of the community. The approach includes observation in the field, cultural participation, interviews with artists, artisans, cultural practitioners and community members, and photographing and audio-visually documenting the culture. Ethnographic Research gives immediate and original information about the processes of production, transmission, preservation and contemporary significance of artistic heritage. It allows the collection of local voices and experience that can't be obtained from written historical records.

12. Sources and Data Collection

Primary Sources

In the study titled 'Reframing Traditional Painting in Media and Communication: The Visual Culture of Srimanta Sankaradeva and its Postmodern Relevance to Ecological Consciousness and Global Sustainability', both primary and secondary sources have been used, providing a comprehensive and interdisciplinary study. The process of data collection is directed towards historical, visual, cultural and ethnographic aspects of the artistic heritage of Srimanta Sankaradeva and its relevance in the current context of media, communications, environment and sustainability.

Primary Sources

i. Illustrated Manuscripts

The visual language, narration, symbolic motifs and art conventions of the Neo-Vaishnavite tradition are discussed through the illustrated manuscripts. The manuscripts offer some valuable

insights into the way in which religious and cultural information was provided through both textual and visual means. Selected manuscripts are analysed in terms of the artistic styles, iconographic elements and depictions of nature, spirituality and human-environmental relationships.

ii. Satra Collections

The collections in different Satras are one of the important sources of the visual and cultural data. The manuscripts, paintings, masks, ritual objects, textiles and other art objects found in these collections are related to the Neo-Vaishnavite movement. The analysis of Satra collections offers insights into the development of visual culture of Assam and how the art traditions have been passed on, preserved and developed over the years. Special focus is placed on the community-oriented values, ethical living and ecological harmony that are portrayed in these materials.

iii. Traditional Paintings

The main data consists of traditional paintings from Assam, some of which are religious and others are from the cultural movement of Sankaradeva, which is an ongoing tradition in the region. The visual composition, the symbolism, iconography, environmental motifs and functions of these paintings are analyzed. The study examines the continued significance of traditional paintings in the construction of cultural memory and the potential for re-imagining the visual narratives in this artwork in light of today's debates on ecological awareness and global sustainability.

iv. Archival Materials

Sources of contextual data include archival materials like historical records, institutional documents, exhibition catalogues, photographs, preservation reports and unpublished manuscripts. The sources aid in the reconstruction of the history of painting traditions and document the changes in the traditions over time. The evidence from archives is also used in the understanding of the role of visual communication in the conservation of cultural heritage and environmental values.

v. Interviews with Artists and Scholars

Interviews with contemporary artists, art historians, cultural practitioners, Satra authorities and scholars of the art, visual culture, media studies and environmental humanities are semi-structured. The interviews offer insights into the ongoing significance of Sankaradeva's visual traditions, present-day understandings of traditional paintings and how they can be integrated into the discussions on ecological awareness and sustainability. The interviews also facilitate the historic and cultural interpretation of the present, and their connection is also vital to the analysis.

Secondary Sources

The secondary sources are an integral part of the research method used in the study, "Reframing Traditional Painting in Media and Communication: The Visual Culture of Srimanta Sankaradeva and Its Postmodern Relevance to Ecological Consciousness and Global Sustainability".

The information and analyses from these sources allow the reader to understand the visual culture of Srimanta Sankaradeva and its relevance to the times in which he lived. Secondary sources can be used to gain a broader understanding of the traditions of art in more expansive media studies and visual culture analyses, environmental humanities, and sustainability discourse.

i. History of Assam Books

The socio-political, cultural and religious changes, which gave birth to the Neo-Vaishnavite movement and its art forms can be gathered from the books dealing with the history of Assam. These works provide a framework to better appreciate Sankaradeva's contribution to Assamese society and an understanding of the historical influences on the development of painting, manuscript illustration, performance traditions and communication through visual art. Historical studies also help to identify continuity and changes in cultural heritage from one period to another.

ii. Indian Art History Books

Scholarly writings on Indian art history provide us with critical analysis and understanding of the development of artistic traditions, visual aesthetics, iconographic conventions and artistic expressions from across the Indian region within the wider Indian cultural context. They allow comparisons to be made between the styles of painting and other Indian painting schools. They also give the theoretical basis for the understanding of artistic style, symbolism, religious imagery and visual narratives, relevant to the study.

iii. Peer-Reviewed Journals

Academic journals in which articles are peer-reviewed are valuable sources of up-to-date and trustworthy research. The articles featured in art history and visual culture, cultural studies, media/communication, environmental humanities, sustainability studies and cultural heritage of Assam journals offer critical interpretations and contemporary views. These publications help to focus on the theoretical and analytical aspect of the study, presenting latest debates, research findings and methodology related to traditional painting and ecological consciousness.

iv. Periodicals

The cultural magazines, newsletters, research bulletins and other periodicals serve as a source of additional information on current artistic practices, current projects of heritage conservation, as well as museum work, exhibitions and public discussions on art and culture. The sources assist in defining the trends in visual communication, cultural representation and art that is focused on sustainability. Periodicals also provide a clue as to the ways in which the traditional visual culture is interpreted and disseminated in modern society.

v. Open-Access Archives

Manuscripts, historical documents, photographs, research papers, digitized artworks and other visual materials that relate to the study are available in digital repositories and open access archives. These resources help to improve access to rare and geographically distributed resources, and, to some extent, enable comparative and interdisciplinary research. Open-access archives can be especially valuable when studying the history of images, and tracking the spread of artistic knowledge from one place to another, or from one time to the next.

vi. Museum Catalogues

The catalogues of the museums include descriptions, photographs of works of art and cultural artifacts, plus records of their origins, interpretations by the curators, and scholarly essays. These catalogues are useful references to recognize the characteristics of traditional paintings, iconographic themes and their historical value in traditional paintings and related images. They also document professionally the preservation, exhibition and interpretation of artistic heritage of Assam.

13. Analysis of Visual Culture and Communication

The present study examines the analysis of visual culture and communication to gain insight into the way traditional paintings, which are connected to the cultural heritage of Srimanta Sankaradeva, are powerful tools for communication, cultural preservation and creation of social meaning. The visual is analysed not only as an object of art but as a system of communication which can transmit religious and cultural messages, ethical and ecological values, from one generation to the next. It examines how traditional paintings contribute to the collective consciousness and the preservation of cultural heritage in today's context through visual, semiotic and cultural analysis.

i. Symbolism in Paintings

Symbols are an integral part of traditional paintings. The use of colors, plants, animals, scenes, religious figures and other elements serve as symbols with several layers of cultural and spiritual significance. These symbols convey teachings of morals, devotional ideals, ecological balance, and philosophical ideas that are related to the Neo-Vaishnavite tradition. To understand the meaning of the symbolic images, and how they cross language barriers and can be used as a powerful vehicle for conveying deep cultural issues and ecological ethics.

ii. Visual Narratives

A traditional painting may be used to depict a religious narrative or mythological episode, moral lessons, or cultural events. These narrative compositions arrange the image in such a manner that allows guiding the viewer through a series of events and meanings. Visual stories are one of the

means of non-verbal communication that allow viewers to access the cultural knowledge through observation and interpretation. The study focuses on the constructions of cultural identities, historical memory, messages about social harmony, spirituality and human-nature in these narratives.

iii. Communication Strategies

The communicative function of traditional paintings is to convey information, beliefs and values in a visual manner. Artistic elements like symbolism, composition, repetition of motifs and story sequence are used as communication methods to make cultural messages accessible for various audiences. The paintings were significant in the spread of religious doctrine and culture within communities of differing literacy levels in the past. In today's world, they still serve as effective means of visual communication, bridging the gap between old and new, and between local and global issues, like environment awareness and sustainable life.

iv. Cultural Transmission

Traditional paintings have played an important role in perpetuating and passing on the collective knowledge, traditional practices, beliefs and art forms. The continuity of the cultural values and the cultural resistance are ensured through a visual representation, which passes the values from one generation to another. It examines the role of art and cultural activities linked with Sankaradeva's cultural movement in the preservation of the identity and its influence in the current cultural expression. The way visual media transmit culture also shows the timeless value and importance of traditional knowledge in the changing world.



Title: Sanchipat manuscript painting from the Assam School of Manuscript Painting, depicting Bhagavata Purana (Krishna/Vaishnavite scenes), created in the Neo-Vaishnavite Satra tradition of Assam (16th–19th century).

Courtesy: Assam State Museum / Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra / Satra manuscript tradition.

The paintings are from Sanchipat tradition of Assam School of Manuscript Painting from Assam state of India and are from Bhagavata Purana related to Krishna and Vaishnavite tradition of the 16th-19th century, made in the context of Neo-Vaishnavite Satra culture of Assam with courtesy of Assam State Museum, Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra and Satra manuscript painting culture of Assam.

v. Collective Memory

Visual culture has an important role in the process of forming and retaining collective memory. In general, traditional paintings serve as a repository of collective historical experiences, cultural narratives and values of the community. They remind communities of their history and reframe it in their own way and help provide a sense of community belonging and identity. The study looks at how visual representations of Sankaradeva help to create a collective memory as well as the role of these images in the present cultural consciousness. In the modern world, the visual memory offers valuable documents for promoting ecological awareness, cultural sustainability and an understanding of the relationship between heritage and the environment.

14. Ecological Consciousness and Environmental Ethics

This study is a crucial consideration of the ecological awareness and environmental ethics that underlie the visual culture of Srimanta sankaradeva and his time. The interdependence of the human and natural world is often very evident in traditional paintings and visual anecdotes arising from the Neo-Vaishnavite cultural tradition. The artistic depictions convey moral lessons, religious views, and traditions that embrace harmony with nature and coexistence in the environment. These visual practices provide important clues to sustainable thinking and living in the face of the great challenges of our global environment.

i. Human–Nature Relationships

Traditional visual culture depicts nature as a physical environment and as a part of humanness. In paintings, rivers, forests, animals, birds and landscapes often are depicted as participant actors in cultural and spiritual life. These illustrations illustrate the interdependency of human communities and ecological systems and the notion that human health is intertwined with environmental health. The research explores the effects of visual stories on ecological awareness

and environmental responsibility, as well as the way in which they evoke a balance and respectful relationship with nature.

ii. Sacred Ecology

Sacred ecology is the view of nature that it has spiritual meaning and has a moral value. In the Neo-Vaishnavite tradition, one can find many parallels between elements in nature and divine presence, spiritual harmony and moral living. The traditional artworks portray religious scenes, symbolic animals and plants, and sacred landscapes, fostering a sense of awe towards nature. These expressions of the vision of the environment help to create an ecological worldview where the protection of the environment represents a moral and spiritual duty as well as a need for practical life. The idea of sacred ecology is therefore a useful tool to analyse the environmental ethics related to cultural heritage.

iii. Environmental Stewardship

Environmental stewardship is a focus on the role of people and communities to steward and protect the environment. The values promoted by the visual culture of Sankaradeva are compassion, moderation, harmony and collective welfare, which can be read as the values of sustainable environmental practices. Traditional paintings through art and culture convey ethical values enabling responsible use of natural resources. The paper discusses how these values can be a part of the current debates on environmental protection and sustainable development.



Title: Researcher on Sanchipat Manuscript Painting, Assam

***Courtesy:**Dr. Aditi Deka, Post-Doctoral Research Scholar, specializing in traditional Sanchipat manuscript painting of Assam.*

Incorporating the eco-philosophical ideals of Srimanta Sankaradeva, the Assamese visual artist and researcher, Dr. Aditi Deka breathes new life into the traditional manuscript painting of Assam using Sanchipat in order to create a visual narrative around ecological consciousness, environmental ethics and worldviews of sustainability.

Why it works:It sets up a cause/effect link. It sets up Sankaradeva's ideology as the base line and the Sanchipat painting as the working strategy to attain the conceptual targets.

iv. Ecological Symbolism

Ecological symbolism is seen in the use of nature in the transmission of cultural, spiritual and moral values. Nature images (trees, water, flowers, animals and other nature-related motifs) often serve as symbols of life, purity, balance, renewal and connection. These symbols represent ecological values in visual forms which are portable from generation to generation and across cultures. The research decodes the traditional paintings and uncovers their ecological symbols, while also examining how traditional paintings depict environmental consciousness and raise awareness of the intrinsic connection between man and nature.

v. Cultural Sustainability

Cultural Sustainability includes maintaining and passing on cultural knowledge, values, traditions and art forms that uphold social and environmental sustainability. The traditional paintings are carriers of the wisdom of nature, ethics and collective memory, which add to cultural continuity. The study examines how the visual culture of Sankaradeva can contribute to the current discussion on sustainability, by keeping the sustainable worldviews alive and promoting culturally local sustainable practices. Cultural sustainability, in turn, relates to the protection of heritage and ecological responsibility and community resilience.

15. Global Sustainability Perspectives

The visual culture of Srimanta Sankaradeva has a great relevance in the current global sustainability discourse. While deeply embedded in the cultural and spiritual heritage of Assam, the principles of traditional paintings hold the key to important aspects of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including harmony, ethical living, community welfare, environmental responsibility and cultural preservation. The study explores how these visual

traditions, when viewed through the lens of sustainability, can help to meet some of the challenges of the present day, while simultaneously raising ecological awareness and social well-being.

i. SDG 4: Quality Education

Traditional paintings and visual stories record cultural knowledge and values, historical experiences and environmental awareness, and are important educational tools in teaching and learning cultural and environmental values. The visual culture of Sankaradeva emphasizes upon life-long learning and helps in maintaining indigenous knowledge systems and cultural literacy. These artistic traditions have the potential to support inclusive and quality education across various mediums including museums, archives, education institutions and digital platforms, promoting creativity, critical thinking, cultural awareness, and environmental awareness.

ii. SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Preservation of cultural heritage is an important aspect of sustainable communities. The traditional paintings of the Neo-Vaishnavite tradition help to reinforce cultural identity, social cohesion and collective memory. Cultural resilience and sustainable development can be improved by protecting and improving cultural heritage and encouraging the involvement of communities in cultural activities. The study emphasizes the role of the visual culture in promoting sustainable thinking and building inclusive, culturally-diverse, and environment-friendly communities in order to address the Sustainable Cities and Communities targets.

iii. SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

These art forms that are related to Sankaradeva often reflect a sense of simplicity, moderation and respect for natural resources. Traditional art making usually involves the use of local raw materials, traditional knowledge and sustainable art making processes. The methods are consistent with current initiatives for the promotion of responsible consumption and sustainable production systems. The study explores the potential of traditional cultural values to influence sustainable attitudes and behaviors towards the environment in the contemporary society.

iv. SDG 13: Climate Action

Climate change is now one of the greatest problems currently facing the world in the 21st century. Traditional paintings and stories create ecological values that promote the awareness of environmental balance and human responsibility for the environment. These visual cultures can serve as a way to communicate harmony between people and nature, and thus be used as a tool for climate education and environmental advocacy. The study indicates a potential for the cultural heritage to be a driver of cultural values and moral considerations that can be linked to environmental issues and climate action.

v. SDG 15: Life on Land

Forests, rivers, plants, animals and everything else that is biodiversity is often represented in the traditional visual culture. These depictions demonstrate a respect for diversity in the natural world and the relationships of all living things. These art forms foster the values of nature, encourage sustainable environmental management, and are part of a larger initiative to safeguard the Earth's land-based ecosystems and biodiversity. The paper investigates the potential of ecological symbolism in the traditional paintings to contribute to today's various initiatives in environmental conservation and sustainable land management.

vi. SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

The preservation and promotion of cultural heritage need to be done in a way which involves IHEs, cultural institutions and organizations, museums and archives, artists, researchers, policy-makers and communities. The study acknowledges the need for a cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral collaboration to help preserve traditional visual culture and to support sustainable goals. Implementing collaborative efforts to carry out research, documentation, conservation, digital dissemination, and public engagement can reinforce the importance of cultural heritage in creating sustainable development at the local, national and global levels.

Title of the Research	Theme	Connected SDGs	Key Objectives	Relevance to Global Sustainability Perspectives
Media, Communication and Traditional Painting: Exploring Srimanta Sankaradeva's Visual Culture in the Context of Ecological Consciousness and Global Sustainability	Global Sustainability Perspectives	SDG 4: Quality Education; SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production; SDG 13: Climate Action;	- Examine Sankaradeva's visual culture within the framework of media, communication, and traditional painting. - Explore ecological consciousness, environmental ethics, and human–nature relationships embedded in Neo-Vaishnavite visual narratives. - Investigate traditional painting as a medium of cultural, spiritual, and ecological communication.	The study highlights the role of indigenous visual heritage in fostering ecological awareness, environmental ethics, and sustainable cultural practices. It contributes to sustainability education (SDG 4), preservation of cultural heritage and resilient communities (SDG 11), promotion of responsible values and lifestyles (SDG 12), climate-conscious thinking (SDG 13), conservation-oriented human–nature relationships (SDG 15), and interdisciplinary collaboration between culture, communication, and

		SDG 15: Life on Land; SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals	Assess the contemporary relevance of Sankaradeva's visual culture in advancing sustainability discourse and SDGs.	sustainability studies (SDG 17).
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Alignment of the Proposed Research with Global Sustainability Perspectives and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

16. Delimitation of the Study

The study of the visual culture of Srimanta Sankaradeva is conceptually and methodologically restricted so that it could be analyzed in an interdisciplinary way. It explores primarily manuscript painting, visual narratives, symbolic communication and ecological representations in the context of Neo-Vaishnavite traditions, only extends to other religious or literary interpretations where it is directly related to the visual communication.

Geographically, the study is located in the context of the culture of Assam in India, and analytically in the global discourses of media studies and the ecological humanities. It does not make cross-cultural empirical comparisons other than for theoretical references.

Research methodologically is qualitative research and is interpretive research with visual analysis, textual interpretation and theoretical synthesis, quantitative research and experimental research is not used.

17. Findings, Innovation and Contribution to Knowledge

The study titled "Media, Communication and Traditional Painting: Exploring Srimanta Sankaradeva's Visual Culture in the Context of Ecological Consciousness and Global Sustainability", provides important insights into the various fields of studies such as visual culture, media and communication, art history, environmental humanities and sustainability studies. The combination of traditional painting and modern concepts has provided new ideas in the approach to understanding the connection between cultural heritage, environmental ethics and global sustainability.

i. New Interdisciplinary Framework

The study has been a great contribution to the development of a new interdisciplinary framework which includes a combination of Visual Culture Theory, Semiotics, Iconography, Ecocriticism, Environmental Humanities, Cultural Ecology, Sustainability Theory, and Postmodern Theory. This integrated approach provides a comprehensive understanding of traditional paintings in terms of their artistic, communicative, cultural and ecological nature as texts. The study shows that looking at visual culture is not only an aesthetic and historical experience but also a means of raising environmental awareness, transmitting culture and transforming a society. This can widen the field of visual culture research and serve as an example to other disciplines.

ii. Indigenous Sustainability Model

The research discovers and conceptualises an indigenous sustainability model that is part of the visual culture that has been linked with Srimanta Sankaradeva. The values found in traditional paintings include harmony, moderation, a sense of responsibility for the community, respect for nature and a sense of spiritual interconnectedness, thus reflecting similar values to those of sustainable development as are found today. The study suggests that such indigenous ecological views are alternative and culturally-based visions of sustainability, which complement contemporary environmental policies. This model is a presentation of the significance of local knowledge systems and cultural traditions in dealing with global environmental problems.

iii. Art-Based Environmental Communication Strategy

The other innovative conclusion of the study is the traditional painting as an effective environmental communication medium. The narratives, ecological symbolism and messages found in paintings are effective means of conveying environmental values and ethics. It suggests that this can be achieved by employing an art-based environmental communication approach that leverages the traditional visual culture to raise ecological awareness, climate consciousness, conservation of biodiversity and sustainable living. This method shows the potential for arts to be a medium of public engagement for environmental issues, in culturally relevant and accessible ways.

iv. Contribution to Global Visual Culture Studies

The study is a valuable addition to the field of global visual culture as it introduces artistic traditions into the wider international academic discourses. Although much of the research in the field of visual culture has been directed towards Western cultures or towards a mainstream arts tradition, the research here has highlighted the intellectual and cultural value of indigenous or regional visual cultures. The study explores Sankaradeva's visual culture in the light of the current theories of visual culture, thereby making it a geographical and conceptual enlargement of the scope of visual culture studies. It also showcases the potential of local art forms to engage in the international discussion on identity, communication, ecology and sustainability.



18. Conclusion, Recommendations and Future Research Directions

As illustrated in the study “Reframing Traditional Painting in Media and Communication: The Visual Culture of Srимanta Sankaradeva and its Postmodern Relevance to Ecological Consciousness and Global Sustainability”, traditional painting is a much more than just an artistic media. It serves as a living, dynamic communication medium which serves as a repository of cultural memory, a bearer of ethical values and an agent of ecological awareness (Berger, 1972). The research shows that the principles of harmony, sustainability, social responsibility and nature conservation in the visual culture of Srимanta Sankaradeva have relevance in today's society, which are captured in the interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks (Neog, 1980).

Overall the study has confirmed the traditional paintings' role as a visual narrative in communicating cultural identity and environmental ethics through time (Mitchell, (1994). They act as symbols and communicative elements that are useful in the solution of issues facing society today in the field of cultural preservation, environmental protection and global development. The research builds on the understanding that cultural heritage should be linked to contemporary theories of visual culture, media studies and environmental humanities in order to create a wider understanding of how cultural heritage can inform sustainable futures.

Recommendations

i. Implications for Art Education

Traditional visual culture should be introduced into the subject of art in the school, college and university curricula. Students' cultural literacy, innovative thinking, and awareness about the environment can be improved by incorporating indigenous artistic traditions. Traditional paintings can also serve as didactic materials to present the visual communication, cultural heritage, and sustainability studies, using interdisciplinary ways of teaching (Eisner, 2002).

ii. Heritage Conservation Policies

Traditional visual culture should be introduced into the subject of art in the school, college and university curricula. Students' cultural literacy, innovative thinking, and awareness about the environment can be improved by incorporating indigenous artistic traditions. Traditional paintings can also serve as didactic materials to present the visual communication, cultural heritage, and sustainability studies, using interdisciplinary ways of teaching (Eisner, 2002).

iii. Environmental Awareness Programs

The ecological themes that are expressed in Sankaradeva's artwork can be used effectively in environmental awareness programs and programs that address sustainability. Traditional visual stories, exhibitions, workshops and public education programs can be used by cultural and educational institutions to raise awareness and promote environmental ethics and biodiversity conservation, and the responsible stewardship of natural resources. Culturally based strategies can contribute to more public involvement in environmental matters (Garrard, 2012).

iv. Digital Preservation

Digital technologies should make use of the systematic preservation, documentation and dissemination of traditional artistic heritage. The implementation of high resolution digitalization, online archives, virtual exhibitions, digital repositories and multimedia platforms can help make the content more accessible and ensure its longterm preservation. Digital preservation approaches also have the potential to support research, learning and an understanding of visual culture and the environment (Cameron, F. & Sarah, K. (eds. 2007).

Future Research Directions

i. Interdisciplinary Research

Research can be further developed in the fields of intersections between visual culture, media studies, environmental humanities, anthropology, cultural geography and sustainability science in the future. These cross-disciplinary explorations can help to broaden the understanding of how art can help to address today's environmental and social issues.

ii. Comparative and Cross-Cultural Studies

Analytical studies that can be carried out in the study of visual traditions and other indigenous or regional artistic traditions may give broader knowledge in the study of the relation between visual culture, ecology and sustainability. Cross-cultural analysis can also show common values across cultures and show unique cultural approaches towards ecological consciousness.

iii. Digital Humanities and Visual Communication

Future researchers will have the opportunity to explore how digital technologies are changing the way that traditional visual culture is communicated, preserved and interpreted. Digital humanities and media studies are emerging fields with discussions related to virtual exhibitions, digital storytelling, artificial intelligence and online heritage platforms, which can be informed by research.

iv. International Collaborations

Research should be encouraged that involves collaboration among universities, museums, cultural institutions, environmental institutions and international scholars. These collaborations can help to share knowledge, conduct comparative studies, protect and preserve heritage, and promote the dissemination of art traditions around the world. International partnerships could also help reinforce the role of ICH in the global discourse on sustainability and environmental values.

19. Disclaimer

The study is conducted through critical reading, analysis, and interpretation of the available sources of images, texts and scholarly materials in media studies and environmental humanities. The opinions and interpretations are solely academic and for post-doctoral research.

The research is not historical or universal but seeks to offer interpretations and suggestions for the field in cultural and visual studies. All results are context-specific and are integrated in an interdisciplinary analytical perspective.

20. Author's Contribution

Conceptualization: The author conceived and designed the research study.

Data Curation: The author collected, organized, and managed all research data and relevant sources.

Investigation: The author conducted the investigation, including literature review, data collection and interpretation.

Formal Analysis: The author performed the analysis and interpretation of the findings and prepared the manuscript.

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