

A Critical Analysis and Framework of Contemporary Indian Artists' Creative Practices; In Concern of Experimental Approaches

Shatrudhan Kumar Gupta

Research scholar (PhD),
Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts, Shanghai University, Shanghai, China

Abstract:

The paper offers a critical analysis of the role and nature of experimentation in the creative practices of contemporary Indian artists, including Jagannath Panda, L.N. Tallur, Manjunath Kamath, Jitish Kallat, and Shilpa Gupta. The primary objective of this research study is to understand the theoretical and practical frameworks underlying these experimentations and to present them in a systematic framework. Focusing on a close analysis of the selected artwork of these prominent artists, this research paper examines how experimentation serves as a conscious challenge to the limitations of traditional mediums and subject matter. This research paper argues that this experimental nature keeps contemporary Indian art a dynamic, thought-provoking, and constantly evolving field, redefining not only aesthetic but also socio-political discourse.

Keywords: Indian Artist, Contemporary Artist, Artist Approach, Creative Art Practice, Experimental Art, Artwork.

Introduction:

Experimentation has emerged as a central and dynamic force in Indian art after liberalization in 1991. Within this broader context, this research paper offers a critical analysis and theoretical framework of the creative practices of contemporary Indian artists, with an experimental approach as a key pillar. This research paper explores how today's artists are transcending the boundaries of traditional medium and approaches, and exploring new medium and visual images of expression.

The artwork of renowned artists such as Jagannath Panda, L.N. Tallur, Manjunath Kamath, Jitish Kallat, and Shilpa Gupta is considered a prime example of this analysis in this research paper. Jagannath Panda's distinctive artistic process incorporates traditional brocade fabrics into his work, where they serve as the skin of animals, the bark of trees, and the garments of mythical characters. By juxtaposing mythological stories with contemporary reality and traditional Indian design with images from Western and Indian popular culture, creates a visual

dialogue that explores the effects of globalization and rapid development in the country. L.N. Tallur's creative practices involve complex layers, balancing traditional Indian crafts with a contemporary approach. He uses various media such as sculpture, installation, video, and interactive work to explore socio-historical narratives. Through contradiction in materials and digital techniques, L.N. Tallur dynamically recontextualizes traditional arts for contemporary relevance. Manjunath Kamath's artistic practices synthesize India's diverse classical and folk, aesthetic traditions, sacred and secular, material and performative. Through playful and impactful dialogue between past and present, his creations interrogate historical structure and possibilities for the future. Jitish Kallat redefines visual language by experimenting with time, mathematical structures, memory, and temporality in his artworks. His experimentation reinterprets text, light, symbols, and forms in a contemporary context. Shilpa Gupta's creations embody the social and political context, fabric of borders, and collective consciousness, for which she uses diverse media such as installation, site-specific installation, interactive object, video, text, sound, and sculptural objects. Through her creation, sometimes, Shilpa Gupta boldly blurs the line between artwork and experience, inviting and engaging viewers as a co-participant.

“Through innovative approaches, artists capture the essence of Indian mythology, folklore, and spirituality, infusing their creations with layers of meaning that reflect both ancient traditions and contemporary sensibilities” (Atul Nandkumar Kunjar and Dr. Prof. Jay Patel, 2025).

This paper aims to outline the experimental strategies that not only define the individual artistic styles of these artists but also shape the evolving identity of contemporary Indian art within the context of experimental creative practices. The research paper concludes that the experimental approaches of these artists act as a catalyst, sparking art that prevents it from being turned into a static object. The experimental approaches of these artists re-establish creative practices as a dynamic and iterative process, characterized by continuous examinations, critical questioning, and ongoing development in contemporary Indian art, ensuring its sustained relevance and vitality in cultural discourse.

JAGANNATH PANDA (1970):

Jagannath Panda's highly detailed mixed-media artworks, including paintings, drawings, and sculptures, combine mythology and reality, traditional Indian art motifs, and images of Western and Indian contemporary culture to examine the impact of globalization and rapid development around the nation. The natural and the human-made intersect and blend both seamlessly and uneasily in his artworks. Jagannath Panda tries to depict the paradox of development and traditional culture through his works by using various materials and visual images.

Jagannath Panda's artistic practice has been distinguished by rigorous experimentalism with its material and form. Through a combination of techniques, including fabrics, collage, and other materials, he dismantles traditional boundaries between mediums. “Panda makes use of techniques from collage (fabric collage to texture the skin of an animal or the upholstery of an interior scene is one of Panda's preferred techniques), assemblage art, combining painting, and

construction art”¹ (Karin Shankar, 2022)². By integrating painting, assemblage, and construction art, Jagannath Panda challenges conventional representation. “Jagannath Panda's signature technique is to incorporate traditional brocade fabrics into the surfaces, often becoming the skins of beasts, the bark of trees, and the garments of the mythological figures. He also often uses animal forms in his artworks, and his animals function as icons. Jagannath Panda is also highly influenced by the mythological tales of India” (Akara Art, Mumbai). Incorporating upholstery and other fabrics in the structures creates a tactile interaction that redefines surface and depth. This interdisciplinary approach reflects ongoing research into the materiality of art, positioning Jagannath Panda's work within a broader discourse on expanded artistic processes.

Jagannath Panda was born in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India, in 1970. He completed his Bachelor's degree in fine arts from the B.K. College of Arts and Crafts in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, in 1991, and the Master of Fine Arts from the Faculty of Fine Arts, M.S. University, Vadodara, Gujarat, in 1993, and another Master's Degree from the Royal College of Arts in London in 2002. His work has been a part of numerous solo and group shows at distinguished galleries and art museums around the world, such as the Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi, in 2017 and 2023, Emami Art Kolkata, in 2022, Akara Art, Mumbai, in 2022, the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan, in 2018, the Jeju World Heritage Natural Centre, South Korea, in 2019, the Modern Art Museum, Shanghai, in 2016, Halcyon Gallery, London, in 2015, and many among others. Jagannath Panda was a visiting researcher at the Fukuoka University of Education, Fukuoka, Japan, in 1997. He received the prestigious ‘Research Grant’ from the Lalit Kala Akademi and ‘Junior Fellowship’ from the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, New Delhi. He has participated in the ‘Khoj International Artist Residency’³, New Delhi, and the ‘Cite International Des Arts’⁴, Paris. Jagannath Panda lives and works in New Delhi.

“Jagannath Panda's works are an amalgamation of art traditions and mediums, coming together to create a style which is distinctly his own. A native of Odisha, his art tells the tale of his immediate surroundings, tales of urbanization, and politics of land” (Kapil Chopra)⁵. Jagannath Panda mixes myth and reality, themes of traditional Indian art with those of contemporary cultures, and uses materials like silver foil, threads, tracing sheets, textiles, clothes, and glue in his creations.

American curator and gallerist, Peter Nagy, said, “Social and environmental issues also concern Panda; his subjects are found on the front page of today’s newspaper, and in its own backyard. The commonplace object is given symbolic stature, asked to represent communities, aspirations, or even dogmas. The juxtaposition of diverse materials in a single work enables the artist to speak with multiple voices. The collage and assemblage are divorced from their surrealist

¹ Immanent Urbanism in Jagannath Panda's Art, Article by Karin Shankar (ASAP/Journal, Volume 7, Number 1, January 2022, pp. 145-170).

² Karin Shankar is an Assistant Professor of Performance Studies in the Department of Humanities and Media Studies at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York.

³ Khoj is an autonomous non-profit contemporary art organization founded in 1977 in New Delhi.

⁴ Cite International Des Arts (Cite International des Arts) was founded in 1965, and it invites artists from all over the world to take part in its international artist residency program in Paris.

⁵ Kapil Chopra is an Indian art collector who opened a contemporary art gallery, ‘Art District XIII’, in 2014 in New Delhi.

patrimony and function as both memory and mirror, storing preconceived meanings and reflecting a contradictory reality” (Peter Nagy)⁶.

Jagannath Panda’s works employ traditional themes in modern styles with rich colours, delicate textures, and mythological allusions, and his works are a unique blend of Indianness and global contemporary trends, making connections and providing a deep experience of the bond that unites cultural heritage and modernity. His work titled *Untitled*, created in 2017 (Figure 1), is a meticulous visual depiction of a fast-growing urban city, where the artist tried to explore the contradiction between urbanization and socialization through various visual images, including human imagery, birds, animals, construction sites, working people, heavy cranes, and other standing sculptures. For creating this work, the artist used various acrylic colours, fabric, and glue on canvas. Placement of figures, especially human figures, in miniature forms, shows the artist’ high quality artistic ability and compositional knowledge. In this work, the imagery of the rooster seems three-dimensional because of its detailed and realistic approach to creation.



Figure 1, Artist: Jagannath Panda, Title: *Untitled*, Medium: Acrylic, Fabric, and Glue on Canvas, Size: 225x195 cm, Year: 2017, Source: www.vadehraart.com.

Within a deserted field, a festive canopy (tent) adorned with delicate embroidery embraces the celebration. This carefully orchestrated ordinary scene is violently disrupted by a freshly killed animal in the foreground. This contrast creates a deep unease, using an experimental clash of cultural decoration and harsh reality, questioning the boundaries between celebration and depravity. (Figure 2). “As a resident of New Delhi’s fast-growing suburb, Gurgaon, Jagannath Panda addresses his own anxieties of displacement and alienation in his paintings and collages. In this painting, we see a large Shamiana (tent) enclosing and demarcating a space for festivities in a somewhat desolate field. The pattern on the tent recalling the delicate appliqué work created in the city of Pipli, near his area of birth in Orissa. While the festivities continue within their enclosed space, a freshly butchered animal lies bleeding in an open field, creating a feeling of unrest and malevolence in this otherwise ordinary landscape” (Christie's)⁷.

His works make people feel uncomfortable because of the use of visual applications and direct questions to modern society. Through a range of visual narration techniques, Jagannath Panda

⁶ Peter Nagy is an American curator and gallerist (Nature Morte Gallery) who lives and works in New Delhi, India.

⁷ <https://www.christies.com.cn/en/lot/lot-5452500>.

amplifies his commentary, delivering a powerful and thought-provoking message that challenges societal norms and leaves a lasting impression.



Figure 2, Artist: Jagannath Panda, Title: Festive Night-II, Medium: Acrylic, Fabric, Mixed Media, and Glue on Canvas, Size: 180x240 cm, Year: 2008, Source: <https://www.christies.com.cn/en>.

“Drawing from his urban surroundings, Panda explores issues of dislocation and chaos experienced in rapidly changing cities. Animals, people, urban objects, concrete structures, and plant forms are meshed in collages, where identities and forms are constantly interrupted, depicting an abstracted, dystopian reality. This fragmentation is further amplified by Panda's usage of mixed media with paint and textile pieces to create distinct textures and surfaces” (*Crystal Cities*, Solo Exhibition, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum, Mumbai, 2017).

Jagannath Panda's artistic approaches have always been experimental in terms of visual application and materiality. He pushes boundaries by blending diverse art media and techniques, exploring new ways to create texture through various layers and meaning beyond traditional methods, and making his creative practice a continuous journey of material and formal discovery.

L.N. TALLUR (1971):

L.N. Tallur's creative practices are multifaceted and multilayered, balancing Indian traditional crafts with contemporary methodology. L.N. Tallur is a conceptual artist who works with various mediums and materials, including sculpture, site-specific installation, video, mixed media, and interactive media, to address social, cultural, and historical concerns. His creative practices explore profound themes like humanity and history, and he discovers and makes connections between the past and the present. L.N. Tallur was born in the year 1971 in Karnataka (a state in the southern part of India). He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting from the Chamarajendra Academy of Visual Arts in Mysuru, Karnataka, in 1996, and a Master of Fine Arts degree in museology from the Maharaja Sayajirao University (M.S. University) in Vadodara, Gujarat, India, in 1998. Later, he went to the UK to study for an M.A. in 'Contemporary Fine Art Practice' at the 'Metropolitan University', Leeds, in 2002.

L.N. Tallur loves to collaborate with the traditional artisans and craftsmen, and tries to find out the significance of folk art and crafts. Through his art process, he delves into the concept of social, economic, and cultural value, and the exploration of time and history is also an important part of his creative practices. L.N. Tallur uncovers contradictory stories between objects and

materials. He presents Indian traditional arts in a new, dynamic, and relevant form by incorporating contemporary techniques like digital design and various concrete casting.

“Through a unique blend of traditional craftsmanship and cutting-edge technology, artist L. N. Tallur addresses contemporary anxieties, balancing irony and depth to provoke thoughts on themes like environmental decay, technological evolution, and societal fears” (Nikhil Sardana)⁸.

His use of various media and materials for his creation, such as sculpture, installation, interactive, and site-specific work, incorporates and deals with folk handicrafts, handmade craftsmanship, found objects, and organic and industrial materials, symbolizing and creating a correlation between tradition and contemporary customs. His works express and build the rich sculpture tradition of India, and his references come from ancient iconography, religious and patriotic symbology, and mythology. L.N. Tallur’s works are the symbols of conceptual metaphor, and his artworks present a blend of handicrafts and industrial materials.

The New York Times eloquently described Tallur’s work: “Each of his pieces is like a miniature curiosity cabinet, hand-assembled down to the smallest details and packed with charmed and puzzling surprises” (Nature Morte)⁹. L.N. Tallur's sculptures and installations have been exhibited nationally and internationally, including solo shows in Germany, South Korea, India, the United States, and China, and have been displayed in many prestigious group shows in India and abroad. His works are in the permanent collections of several museums in India and abroad. His works not only show the beauty of objects but also explore their underlying narratives and social concerns.

L.N. Tallur's creations blend traditional sculpture and contemporary techniques, which give his artworks a rich and multifaceted thought. He presents Indian art and cultural legacy in contemporary contexts, while maintaining a profound understanding of it. His artworks are often inspired by traditional sculptures and mythological symbols, to which he adds modern social issues and concerns. “Living in different places exposes you to new sights, sounds, tastes, and textures that can be overwhelming at first. However, when you make the effort to understand these nuances, they act as catalysts for artistic thoughts”, L.N. Tallur says. He expresses his life and creations between India and South Korea through his creative practices, which makes his vision and perspective international. L. N. Tallur lives and works between India and South Korea.

The work titled *Lamp (Deepa Sundar)*, which is created in 2010 in bronze and concrete medium, depicts two standing sculptures, facing each other. Their heads, however, are encased within a single, large block of rough concrete, which they appear to support with their raised hands. This fusion creates a striking tension between the classical, detailed metalwork of the bodies and the raw, minimalistic weight of the concrete. This piece of work can be interpreted as a

⁸ Nikhil Sardana is a musician, art enthusiast, and the founder of ‘*Editor of Serenade*’, who lives and works in India.

⁹ Nature Morte is a private contemporary art gallery, opened in New Delhi in 1997 by the American gallerist and curator Peter Negi (founder and director). In recent years, the gallery has another branch in Mumbai, India. The gallery has two exhibition spaces in New Delhi.

commentary on the burdens of tradition, the clash between the ancient and modern, and the often invisible or obscured nature of the value we seek. (Figure 3).



Figure 3, Artist: L.N. Tallur, Title: Lamp (Deepa Sundar), Medium: Bronze and Concrete, Year: 2010, Size: 140x100x60 cm, Source: www.tallur.com.

The work titled *Chromatophobia* (2012) is an interactive piece by L. N. Tallur, created with a wooden log, granite, and hammered coins, presenting the laughing Buddha as a symbol of prosperity in Chinese culture. The narrative reinterprets the monk who renounced the wealth and carried a bag of precious items, using the act of putting it down as a metaphor for separating from one's burden, by inviting viewers as participants to hammer coins onto a wooden log. This piece of work transforms the symbol into a therapeutic ritual. However, the accumulating wealth paradoxically hinders the laughing Buddha's journey, suggesting that clinging to material desires ultimately traps the very existence they are supposed to diminish. (Figure 4).



Figure 4, Artist: L.N. Tallur, Title: Chromatophobia, Medium: Wooden Log, Granite, and hammered Coins, Year: 2012, Size: 231x198x226 cm, Source: www.arrariogallery.com.

“Tallur L.N.’s works reference ancient and popular icons, myths, and symbols, yet he subverts their easy categorization by exposing the universal humor and parody in our relationships to objects across cultures. An artist with a strong background in museology and deep knowledge of materials and conservation techniques, Tallur is known for making works that allude to their eventual decay or transformation despite our best attempts to preserve them. He reminds us

that what we value is always in physical and psychological flux” (Gary Garrido Schneider)¹⁰. Blending handmade crafts with found industrial objects, L.N. Tallur’s multimedia artistic practices, encompassing sculpture, installation, and interactive works, probe the contradiction of developing India. He stages collisions between the traditional and the contemporary to expose the absurdities and deep-seated anxieties of modern life.

MANJUNATH KAMATH (1972):

Manjunath Kamath is an Indian contemporary artist whose versatile art practices include paintings, drawings, terracotta sculpture, digital collages, and video. His art draws from various cultural references in India, a diversity of art forms, traditional and classical, religious and secular, material and performative, decorative and functional. Playful, intriguing, and impactful, his works speak to our times about the past and how we construct it and shape our future. “Manjunath is meticulous in placement and creates a myriad mapping of deeper resonance. It is Moghul Persian Islamic and Indian design dynamics interlinking to create a mosaic of world culture” (Uma Nair¹¹, 2019).

He was born in 1972 in Mangalore, Karnataka, India (Bengaluru is the capital of Karnataka). He studied his Bachelor of Fine Arts at ‘Chamarajendra Academy of Visual Arts (CAVA)’ in Mysuru, Karnataka (1989-1994), and later in 2002, he went to the UK for higher studies at the ‘School of Art and Design’, at the ‘University of Wales Institute’, Cardiff, United Kingdom.

He has had numerous solo shows, group shows, and art fairs in India and abroad. His works are presented in several prestigious private and public collections, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Detroit Museum of Art, and the Art Institute of Chicago in the USA, the Museum of Sacred Art in Belgium, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA), and the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi, India. Manjunath Kamath lives and works in New Delhi, India.

“Manjunath Kamath creates paintings, drawings, and terracotta sculptures that reference historical and classical images using contemporary methods. Kamath is fascinated by time and its impact on materials, especially the erasures and distortions it causes to images, and he reproduces these effects through a laboriously layered process” (Jaipur Centre for Art)¹².

Manjunath Kamath depicts his creation and says, “My work is born of iconographies that belong to my memory. I play with time and the multiple possibilities of memory, and with the beauty of the human oral tradition that shapes personal experiences. The long plait comes from the traditional Bharatanatyam¹³ context”.

“Kamath has made a careful study of traditional (classical/religious) iconography, and his works reflect his understanding of the way elements of a culture, such as styles and conventions

¹⁰ The exhibition *Interference Fringe (Tallur L.N.)*, organized by Gary Garrido Schneider, Executive Director, Ground for Sculpture (Exhibition at Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey, May 5, 2019-January 5, 2020).

¹¹ Uma Nair is an independent curator, art critic, and author based in New Delhi, India.

¹² <https://www.jaipurcentreforart.com/manjunath-kamath>.

¹³ Bharatanatyam is the oldest and most classical Indian dance form. The name ‘Bharatanatyam’ originated from three fundamental concepts: Bhava (Expression), Raga (Melody), and Tala (Rhythm). Bharatanatyam means the dance of Bharata (India).

of depicting figures in painting or sculpture, patterns, and motifs, travel across time and geography, altering even as they retain the impress of their origins. He uses fragmented imagery to stage these seamless encounters, the surface fractured into segments seemingly taken from assorted paintings or sculptures; a hand here, a foot there, the curve of a cheek or a portion of a bird melded with geometric patterns, gilded textile prints, or the decorations on a cupola. He is also fascinated by time and its impact, especially the erasures and distortions it causes on material culture, and he reproduces it on his canvases through a painstakingly layered process. The result is a surface that often resembles a mosaic or a jigsaw puzzle, with missing pieces that the artist seems to invite viewers to find meaning, or to create a story that accounts for all the disparate elements. A sense of playfulness is a hallmark of his practice. But underlying it is a larger, more serious point, a consciousness of the common roots and interconnectedness of cultures” (Gallery Espace, New Delhi)¹⁴.

A towering terracotta sculpture, *Vikatonarva* (Figure 5), created by Manjunath Kamath, was selected by the LACMA¹⁵ 2024 collectors committee for the museum's permanent collection. “The most arresting part of the sculpture is the multiple elements that flank the top crest of his head. Hybrid in many ways, the monumental figure of man echoes so many odysseys of man and nature. Manjunath is a silent historian who treads the four winds and seven seas within myriad moods of fantasy to come up with a mosaic of memories that distill time in an hourglass” (Uma Nair, 2025).



Figure 5, Artist: Manjunath Kamath, Title: *Vikatonarva*, Medium: Coloured Terracotta, Size: 345x112.5x112.5 cm, Year: 2024, Source: www.galleryespace.com, <https://unframed.lacma.org/2025/06/03/50-works-50-weeks-manjunath-kamath-vikatonarva>.

“*Vikatonarva* is a 12-foot-tall terracotta sculpture. Latin for ‘baked earth’, terracotta is the most common sculptural material worldwide. Artists from Greece to Iran, China, and the Americas

¹⁴ Gallery Espace is one of the oldest private and contemporary art galleries in India, established in 1989 by Renu Modi in New Delhi.

¹⁵ LACMA (Los Angeles County Museum of Art), located on the Pacific Rim, western United States, LACMA has the largest art collection of nearly 152000 objects that illuminated 6000 years of artistic expression across the world.

have worked in clay. The oldest terracotta figurines excavated from present-day India date from the 7th millennium BCE.”¹⁶

The work titled *Second Hand Car Goes to Heaven* (2009) is thought-provoking by Manjunath Kamath, which is created in fiberglass, blending the mundane with the mythical. The work features a white car mounted on the gallery wall, appearing to drive upwards towards a destination. Extending from the rear of the car is a long fiberglass pipe structure that descends to the gallery floor, where it culminates in a gathering of several white rabbit sculptures. This installation creates a whimsical yet philosophical narrative, suggesting a journey of transformation. The second-hand car, an object of daily utility, embarks on an impossible ascent, perhaps alluding to the theme of aspiration, the afterlife, or a transition from the material to the spiritual. This installation work invites viewers to contemplate themes of migration, connection, and the cyclical nature of existence. (Figure 6).



Figure 6, Artist: Manjunath Kamath, Title: *Second Hand Car Goes to Heaven*, Medium: Fiber Glass, Size: Variable, Year: 2009, Source: www.galleryspace.com.

“His intricate terracotta sculptures comprise different pieces that are fused together to change the history and context of the sculpture” (India-Bhutan Cultural Exchange and Art Camp, Thimphu, Bhutan, 2016). “The beauty of art, according to me, lies in not always being pleasing but evoking a response or a tension, and an experience”¹⁷ (Manjunath Kamath).

Manjunath Kamath’s artistic practice constitutes a sophisticated archaeological inquiry into the visual vocabulary of South Asian antiquity through a modern approach. His work traces transmigration across temporal and geographical boundaries, revealing a continuous process of adaptation. By bringing together diverse elements, Manjunath Kamath creates a new context that challenges the original meanings, indicating that tradition is maintained not through immutable preservation but through a constant state of change, where the imprint of the past is always reshaped by the conditions of the present.

JITISH KALLAT (1974):

Jitish Kallat was born in 1974 in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the Sir J.J. School of Art in Mumbai in 1996. He is working with diverse materials, creating paintings, sculptures, installations, videos, and mixed-media works. Jitish Kallat’s extensive body of work constructs a complex, multi-layered narrative that depicts the

¹⁶ <https://unframed.lacma.org/2025/06/03/50-works-50-weeks-manjunath-kamath-vikatonarva>.

¹⁷ ‘Revisiting Beauty’ Exhibition Catalogue (The group exhibition *Revisiting Beauty* was curated by Tuntty Chaihan at Gallery Threshold, New Delhi, in 2016).

cycle of life amid the country's rapid modern transformation. His creative practices are influenced by the autobiographical nuance, socio-political critique, and art historical consciousness, functioning as a significant interdisciplinary inquiry. “Jitish Kallat is one of the most prominent figures in Indian contemporary art. His work embodies a confluence of the home-grown and the worldwide, drawing from India's multifaceted history while engaging with universal themes of time, mortality, and the urban experience” (Shubham Shiva¹⁸, 2024).

“One of the recurring aspects of my work is that it frequently shifts focal lengths, exploring human stories and the infinite universe. My work often involves the interplay between the terrestrial and the celestial and a move between the passage of time”¹⁹ (Jitish Kallat).

Jitish Kallat skillfully integrates methodologies and themes from sociology, biology, and archaeology to conduct an in-depth exploration of natural and cultural reconstruction in an era of rapid urbanization and technological changes. Adopting approaches that are both ironic and poetic, Jitish Kallat examines the shifting balance between humanity and its environment, often juxtaposing the cosmic scale with intimate, fleeting details. His artistic approach reveals the contradiction of progress, tracing continuities and ruptures between the memory of ancient civilization and the fragmented present. Jitish Kallat’s work revolves beyond mere documentation into a philosophical meditation on stability amid time, death, and the relentless motion of the globalizing nation. “Jitish Kallat’s oeuvre sits between fluid speculation, precise measurement, and conceptual conjectures, producing dynamic forms of image-making. Using abstract, schematic, notational, and representational languages, he engages with different modes of address, seamlessly interlacing the immediate and the cosmic, the telescopic and the microscopic, the past and present” (Ishara Art Foundation, 2022).

“His conceptually and materially diverse artistic practice frequently intersects with the realms of science, history, and mathematics. While some of his works reflect on the transient present, others invoke the past, drawing from historical archives and utterances”²⁰ (Art Institute Chicago).

Jitish Kallat’s works have been part of numerous solo exhibitions in India and abroad, including the Kochi Muziris Biennale in Kochi, the Chemould Prescott Road and Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai, Bikaner House and Nature Morte in New Delhi, Gallerie Templon in Paris, Ishara Art Foundation in Dubai, John Hansard Gallery in Southampton, UK, Westwater Gallery in New York, Norrtalje Konsthall in Sweden, Galerie Templon in Brussels, Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney, Arario Gallery in Seoul, Bodhi Art in Singapore, Spazio Piazza Sempione in Milan, Walsh Gallery in Chicago, and several others. His works are in the collection of prestigious museums, institutions, and galleries, such as Bihar Museum in Patna, Piramal Museum of Art in Mumbai, Art Institute of Chicago, Birmingham Museum in Birmingham, Boca Raton Museum of Art in the United States, Brooklyn Museum in New York, Burger Collection in Hong Kong, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum in Fukuoka, Ian Potter Museum of Art in Melbourne, and many others.

¹⁸ Shubham Shiva is a Head of the Drawing and Painting Department, DG PG College, Kanpur, India.

¹⁹ <https://curator.guide/jitish-kallat>.

²⁰ <https://www.artic.edu/authors/249/jitish-kallat>.

Jitish Kallat served in the chief curator role and artistic director for the 2nd edition of Kochi Muziris Biennale in Kochi, India, in 2014, along with other curatorial projects, including ‘I draw, there I think’ for South South in 2021, followed by ‘Tangled Hierarch’ at the John Hansard Gallery in Southampton, and ‘Tangled Hierarch-2’, presented by the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art (KNMA) at the invitation program of the 5th Kochi Muziris Biennale in Kochi, India, in 2022.

“Circadian Rhyme is an installation of miniature human figures frozen in awkward positions associated with security checks. They are placed in an arrangement that Kallat describes as a ‘sculptural palindrome’. The figures turn slowly like the hands of a clock, with the result that the two pairs on either end of the installation face opposite directions. This inevitably evokes border checks, surveillance, and paranoia. But, as the artist points out, it originally emerged out of a meditation on peculiar moments within the routine flow of life, when shifting borders suddenly emerge between bodies” (Gallery Chemould, Mumbai)²¹. The work titled, *Circadian Rhyme-4*, is a composition of 24 sculptural figures that was created with aluminium steel, paint, and reins. (Figure 7).



Figure 7, Artist: Jitish Kallat, Title: *Circadian Rhyme-4*, Medium: Paint, Reins, Aluminium Steel, 24 Figurines, Size: 91x457x38 cm, Year: 2012-13, Source: www.gallerychemould.com.

The monumental and evolving work *Ellipsis* (2018-20) represents an organic, cumulative approach to image making by Jitish Kallat. Beginning with a foundation of hand-drawn graphs, the artist has built up a palimpsest of abstract gestures and faintly recognizable forms, effectively creating a speculative map of his own creative process. “*Ellipsis* brings together many of his ongoing concerns at architectural scale, becoming a kind of hyper-enlarged and extended graphic diary where the artist lingers on the spaces between utterances in a state of fevered reverie” (Chaitanya Sambrani, the Canberra-based art historian)²². This work has developed organically over the years. Lately, Jitish Kallat’s painterly practice has more explicitly engaged with his theoretical inquiry, leading to a radical reinvention of his artistic expression. (Figure 8-1, II).

²¹ <https://www.gallerychemould.com/artists/34-jitish-kallat/works/3734-jitish-kallat-circadian-rhyme-4-2012-13/>.

²² <https://jitishkallat.com/works/ellipsis>.



Figure 8-1, II, Artist: Jitish Kallat, Title: Ellipsis, Medium: Mixed Media on Canvas, Size: 270x1800 cm, Year: 2018-20, Source: www.gallerychemould.com and <https://jitishkallat.com/works/ellipsis>.

“Fundamentally speaking, a subtle process of natural selection occurs in the studio. One observes a synchronous convergence between ideas, forms, mediums, materials, and scale at uncanny moments. Artworks typically arrive as unclear intuitions, sometimes carrying within them a discreet ‘birthing manual’ for their arrival. The complex part of the artistic process is making sense of that manual and following it to its logical conclusion with several twists along the way. An external stimulus often unravels an inner monologue which, in time, might materialize as a piece of work, be it in the form of a drawing, video, or painting”²³ (Jitish Kallat).

Jitish Kallat’s creative practices are the confluences of collective memory, scientific inquiry, and existential reflection guided by phenomena in the natural world. This artistic approach provokes deep contemplation about human-made presence within the planetary and cosmic systems. He uses natural material alongside empirical data, measurement, and archival fragments. His interdisciplinary work, which transcends abstraction, historiography, and planning, is characterized by a strategic combination of daily, cosmic scale, contemporaneity, and deep time. Jitish Kallat lives and works in Mumbai, India.

SHILPA GUPTA (1976):

Shilpa Gupta’s artistic practices incorporate various medium and materials, engaging the viewer to think and react. Her multidisciplinary approach in her creations evokes and raises questions for her viewers. Shilpa Gupta was born in 1976 in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India. She completed her Bachelor of Fine Arts, majoring in sculpture, from the Sir J. J. School of Arts in Mumbai in 1997. “Shilpa Gupta's artworks are trans-cultural in their address, notwithstanding when bent with a local specificity” (Alisha Sharma and Dr Arjun Kumar Singh²⁴, 2022).

“She offers an understanding of identity as multi-layered, having to do with the memories, subjectivities, and affects that daily activities and human encounters map onto the mind through the peripatetic movements of the body” (Christine Vial Kayser, 2017)²⁵.

²³ <https://curator.guide/jitish-kallat>.

²⁴ Dr. Arjun Kumar Singh is an Associate Professor at Chitkara Design School, Chitkara University, Punjab, India.

²⁵ Shilpa Gupta: Art Beyond Borders (Written by Christine Vial Kayser).

“Gupta’s multi-disciplinary practice comprises a wide array of media and processes, focusing on issues of power, identity, and expression that occur across spatial and conceptual boundaries” (Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi).

Shilpa Gupta has numerous solo exhibitions in major museum, art institutions, and art gallery such as Kunsthalle St. Annen, Luebeck, Germany, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, Los Angeles, Ishara Art Foundation, Dubai, UAE, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, Frith Street Gallery, London, The Curve, Barbican Centre, London, Yarat Contemporary Art Center, Baku, Azerbaijan, Voorlinden Museum and Gardens, Wassenaar, Netherlands, Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi, Chemould Prescott Road Gallery and Sakshi Gallery, Mumbai, India, OK Center for Contemporary Art, Linz, Austria, Galleria Continua, San Gimignano, Italy, Moving Image Center, Auckland, New Zealand, and several others.

“Over the last two and a half decades, Shilpa Gupta’s interdisciplinary art practice has challenged how individual and collective identities are perceived, governed, and orchestrated by state and societal forces. Her work questions how people, places, everyday objects, and language get recast through nationality, gender, and economic relations. By focusing on moments of unrest, Gupta’s work encourages viewers to participate in imagining a new poetics of resistance” (Ishara Art Foundation, 2025).

Her works are in several public collection, including Asia Society, New York, USA, Borusan Contemporary, Istanbul, Turkey, Bristol Art Museum, Bristol, USA, Burger Collection, Hong Kong, The Pompidou Centre, Paris, France, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, USA, Devi Art Foundation, India, Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka and Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan, Ishara Art Foundation, Dubai, UAE, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, India, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, USA, and many others. Shilpa Gupta lives and works in Mumbai, India.

“Shilpa Gupta, an artist with unexpected freedom of chaos, who shows the possibility, alchemy, the magic of the singular and dual relationship between yin and yang, going forward and backwards. An art in which not only the artist is involved, but viewers also go into it...Gupta’s artworks occupy multiple subjects: artistic anthropology, new media art, post-feminist art, the biennale condition, and trans-disciplinary collaboration across the arts, psychology, sciences, and activism. Shilpa Gupta's work is an open space for a viewer to see the world, which is drastically different in a way that they even can’t imagine” (Akshi Babbar and Dr Gurucharan Singh, 2023).

Shilpa Gupta’s work title, *Untitled* (2020-21), is a poignant exploration of sensory restriction and psychological borders, created in polymer resin and wood. This sculptural work presents three male half-figures, which are mounted on the wooden stand, each enacting a gesture of self-imposed censorship. One sculpture covered the other sculpture's both eyes with its own hand, another covered the other's mouth, and one sculpture covered both ears of its own, creating a chain of suppression. This piece of work shared act of blocking fundamental senses, hearing, sight, and speech, speaks to the intimate and public consequences of political and social borders, illustrating how definitions of acceptable experience are physically and collectively enforced upon self and others. (Figure 9).



Figure 9, Artist: Shilpa Gupta, Title: *Untitled*, Medium: Polymer Resin and Wood, Size: 180x88x111 cm, Year: 2020-21, Source: www.frithstreetgallery.com.

“Though based in Mumbai, through her participation in residency projects, she travelled all over the world with the ease of a global ethnographer” (Parul Dave Mukherji, 2020). The work titled *Untitled* was created in 2022 in concrete, gunmetal, and wood. It is also one of the sculptural installation works of Shilpa Gupta. This work presents a restrained yet evocative arrangement of form and material. In the work, the hand is poised as if holding an object or something, yet grasps nothing, creating a sense of anticipation or absence. A metal block placed upon the hand, suggesting weight, burden, and obstruction. This work reflects Shilpa Gupta’s broader artistic and creative concern with perception, boundaries, and the tension between presence and limitation. (Figure 10).



Figure 10, Artist: Shilpa Gupta, Title: *Untitled*, Medium: Concrete, Gunmetal, and Wood, Size: 20.3x14x135.9 cm, Year: 2022, Source: www.frithstreetgallery.com.

“Her works make obvious the invisible threads that bind various factions of society together, often sensorially challenging her audience to occupy subject-positions of the ‘other’, even if temporarily, to initiate an empathetic understanding. Her works jolt their viewers out of a complacent, assumed, objective distance from the theatre of politics, to show that we are all complicit in the mechanisms of large apparatuses of power” (Galleria Continua)²⁶. Shilpa Gupta's interdisciplinary practice foregrounds language, borders, and surveillance. Using sound, text, and participatory strategies, she exposes invisible structures of power, transforming

²⁶ <https://www.galleriacontinua.com/artists/shilpa-gupta-32/>.

spectators into ethical witnesses. Shilpa Gupta's work is not just about new forms, but about questioning knowledge, identity, and culture itself in a globalizing nation.

Critical Analysis:

A critical framework for understanding the experimental practices of contemporary Indian artists Jagannath Panda, L. N. Tallur, Manjunath Kamath, Jitish Kallat, and Shilpa Gupta, constructed around dialogue with materials, the renegotiation of tradition, and critical engagement with the socio-political concern. These artists' experimental approaches are best understood not as a single style, but as a constellation of inquiries.

Artist Jagannath Panda's canvas becomes a site of psychological and social archaeology. His layered surfaces and hybrid figures are not just aesthetic choices; they are his method for excavating the experiences of memory and displacement that define the time. He collapses the distance between folk memory and contemporary anxiety, creating a charged visual field where the past and present coexist in tension.

Artist L. N. Tallur's practice compels viewers to question the systems that assign value. His work, which juxtaposes meticulously handcrafted forms with industrial materials, is a direct investigation into how meaning is manufactured. By placing the sacred and the profane, the rural and the urban, in a state of deliberate instability, he reveals the cultural mechanisms that construct beliefs about worth and spirituality.

Artist Manjunath Kamath operates at the intersection of the archival and the contemporary. His work is a form of storytelling that draws on the grammar of miniature painting while employing tools of digital manipulation and installation. This isn't a nostalgic return, but a dialogic process, a post-traditional conversation where myth is continuously re-authored through the lens of the now.

Jitish Kallat expands temporal investigation on a grand scale. His large-scale works, installations, and text-based works are experiments with time itself, inviting viewers to reframe the understanding of history, nationhood, and place in the cosmos. By weaving together seemingly disparate events and epochs, Jitish Kallat positions local narratives within a global and even universal discourse, making it challenging to see connections that are otherwise invisible.

And, artist Shilpa Gupta turns attention to the architectures of power that shape daily lives. Her interdisciplinary practice, which moves between sound, text, and participatory structures, is a direct-indirect engagement with the politics of language, borders, and surveillance. Through her work, viewers are transformed from passive observers into ethical witnesses, made acutely aware of the invisible forces that seek to contain and control.

These artists' experimental works are not just for show. It is a tool for questioning basic ideas about creation, like who creates it and what it represents in a rapidly changing nation. In this way, these artists' work becomes a space for important discussion, and experimentation is how these artists understand the world.

Conclusion:

The critical analysis demonstrates that the artistic and creative practices of contemporary Indian artists, such as Jagannath Panda, L.N. Tallur, Manjunath Kamath, Jitish Kallat, and Shilpa Gupta, are fundamentally structured by multi-layered experimentalism. Going beyond mere formal innovation, these artists' experiments constitute a crucial framework for engaging with India's complex socio-political, cultural, and spiritual realities. This framework is characterized by interconnected strategies; hybridity of material and theoretical, and participatory re-composition.

Artist Jagannath Panda and L.N. Tallur exemplify the hybridity of material and theoretical approaches, where organic materials, indigenous objects, and industrial materials are combined not merely for aesthetic purposes but to generate new metaphors to discuss traditions and ecological concerns. Manjunath Kamath and Shilpa Gupta's interactive and series art practices, along with poetic insertions from the other artists, engage in participatory recreation, inviting viewers to construe the work's meaning and thus critique passive consumption, while reflecting the fragmented, polyphonic nature of the modern Indian experience. Jitish Kallat's artwork utilize time sensitive layering, historical narratives, personal memory, and futuristic vision to challenge uniform history and explore the sensibility of time in a rapidly changing nation.

The paper demonstrates that these artists, Jagannath Panda, L.N. Tallur, Manjunath Kamath, Jitish Kallat, and Shilpa Gupta, experimentation is not an end in itself, but rather a necessary methodological approach. These artists' creative practices argue to address the contradiction and vibrancy of contemporary India. The research analysis posits that these artists' experimental approaches are not marginal to Indian contemporary art but central to its most influential and critically engaged expressions, and it offers a dynamic model for understanding the role of art in the post-colonial and globalized context.

References:

Karin Shankar: (January 2022). *Immanent Urbanism in Jagannath Panda's Art*, (ASAP Journal, Volume 7, Number 1, pp. 145-170 (Article).

- (2017). *Crystals Cities* (Solo Exhibition of Jagannath Panda, 26 September 2017-29 October 2017), at Special Project Space, Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum (Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Mumbai City Museum in collaboration with the Vadehra Art Gallery, New Delhi).

Gary Garrido Schneider: (2020). *Interference Fringe* (Solo Exhibition of Tallur L.N., May 5, 2019-January 5, 2020), Published by Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey, www.groundsforsculpture.org (Catalogue).

Uma Nair: (26th January 2019). *Delhi's Gallery Espace Morphs into a Miniature Studio with Manjunath Kamath's New Show*, Architectural Digest (Article).

- (2016). *India-Bhutan Cultural Exchange and Art Camp* (Jointly organised by the Centre for Escalation of Peace, New Delhi, the Royal Office for Media, Thimphu, the Voluntary Artists' Studio, Thimphu, and the India-Bhutan Foundation, Thimphu, 14-18 June 2016 in Bhutan) (Digital Catalogue).

Tunty Chaihan: (2016). *Revisiting Beauty*, the group exhibition was curated by Tunty Chauhan at Gallery Threshold, New Delhi, 23rd August-4th October 2016 (*Digital Catalogue*).

Atul Nandkumar Kunjar and Dr. Prof. Jay Patel: (November 2025). *Contemporary Expressions: The Intersection of Indian Art, Culture, and Society* (IJSART, Volume 11, Issue 11, ISSN: 2395-1052, www.ijsart.com).

Shubham Shiva: (January 2024). *City, Time, and Identity: Jitish Kallat's Dialogue* (International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts 'IJCRT', Volume 12, Issue 1, ISSN: 2320-2882, www.ijcrt.org).

Ishara Art Foundation: (16th February-1st July 2022). *Jitish Kallat: Order of Magnitude*, Solo Exhibition, Dubai, UAE (*Digital Catalogue*).

Christine Vial Kayser: (6th May 2017). *Shilpa Gupta: Art Beyond Borders* (Invisible Culture; An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture, Issue 26).

Akshi Babbar and Dr. Gurucharan Singh: (January-June 2023). *Shilpa Gupta; An Artist Conceptualizing with Technology* (ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts, 4 '1' 467-476, ISSN: 2582-7472).

Ishara Art Foundation: (18th January-31st May 2025). *Shilpa Gupta: Lines of Light*, Solo Exhibition, Dubai, UAE (*Digital Catalogue*).

Parul Dave Mukherji: (2020). *Between the Sky and the Handle: Shilpa Gupta's Drawings in the Contemporary*.

Alisha Sharma and Arjun Kumar Singh: (2022). *The Expansion of New Media Art in Indian Visual Art Practices: An Analysis* (ECS Transactions, 107 '1', ISSN: 10529-10541).

<https://www.vadehraart.com/artists/56-jagannath-panda>.

<https://www.aiconcontemporary.com/artists/jagannath-panda>.

<https://artlivegallery.com/artists/jagannath-panda>.

<https://www.akaraart.com/artist-detail/jagannath-panda>.

<https://www.creativityartgallery.org/jagannath-panda>.

<https://edgeeffects.net/jagannath-pandas-multispecies-urbanism>.

<https://gallerydotwalk.com/artist/29/Jagannath-Pand>.

<https://www.christies.com.cn/en/lot/lot-5452500>.

<https://www.saffronart.com>.

<https://www.arariogallery.com/artists/149-tallur-l.n>.

<https://unframed.lacma.org/2025/06/03/50-works-50-weeks-manjunath-kamath-vikatonarva>.

<https://www.jaipurcentreforart.com/manjunath-kamath>.

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/uma-nair-09002928_lacma-acquisition-manjunath-kamaths-sculpture-activity-7191551754465910784-Ta7I.

<https://curator.guide/jitish-kallat>.

<https://jitishkallat.com>.

<https://www.gallerychemould.com/artists/34-jitish-kallat>.

<https://www.artnet.com/artists/jitish-kallat>.

<https://www.gallerychemould.com/artists/34-jitish-kallat>.

<https://www.artic.edu/authors/249/jitish-kalla>.

<https://www.artnet.com/artists/jitish-kallat>.

<https://naturemorte.com/artists/jitishkallat>.

<https://www.artic.edu/authors/249/jitish-kallat>.

<https://shilpagupta.com>.

<https://www.vadehraart.com/artists/41-shilpa-gupta>.

<https://www.frithstreetgallery.com/artists/32-shilpa-gupta>.

<https://www.galleriacontinua.com/artists/shilpa-gupta-32>.

<https://www.xibtmagazine.com/2024/01/shilpa-gupta-i-did-not-tell-you-what-i-saw-but-only-what-i-dreamt>.