

REPRESENTATION OF SATIRE, WIT AND CROSS CULTURAL INFLUENCES IN THE WORKS OF ATUL DODIYA

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ABSTRACT

The realm of world art is Atul Dodiya's domain but the society where he lives and surrounding always remain a concern for him and that expresses through his art. These expressions are sometimes as forms of humour, wit and satire; which helped him to add dimension to his art. As a master storyteller he merges various references from the culture and art of the world heritage in his own expression of art. His shutter series paintings evolved out of his love for theatre and its objectives of the subject cross-connect the legacy of art of east and west while addressing various issues.

INTRODUCTION

The social and cultural background and the contemporary time where the artist lives is very important for every individual artist; basically that circumstances shape the art for the particular artist. Art is a medium of expression and we express our self, our emotions through art. As we are social beings, what we express through art is the reflection of the society. A true artist must responds to its immediate surroundings, society, and politics. These responses are not always very direct, artists use different tools to express their different emotions, humour, wit and satire are such few among various tools that artist uses. And Atul Dodiya is well off to use those tools to hammer against various social anxieties.

With the ranges of works, Dodiya appeared as a master storyteller, he has uncanny ability to merge references from media to popular culture and art history to politics in his works of art. In one of his paintings, 'Those shoes are mine'; he reveals the deadpan and claims the legacy of the development of art across the world. Dodiya's understanding of his own location helped him to remain true to the life around him that provides his work considerable measure of its spirit.

THOSE SHOES ARE MINE, 1998.



Oil on canvas, 60 x 84 in.

It is indeed difficult to selecting few of Dodiya's works from his diverse range of works. The primary material for the analysis it has been rely primarily on Internet and range of his exhibition catalogues national and international. The description in it is often subjective although it has been tried to make a balance between objective and subjective. The analysis of the artist's decision and my own interpretation this dichotomy should be treated as mutually entangled and overlapping. The emphasis will be placed on Dodiya's artistic expression that undertone social concerns, relevance of choosing materials and the



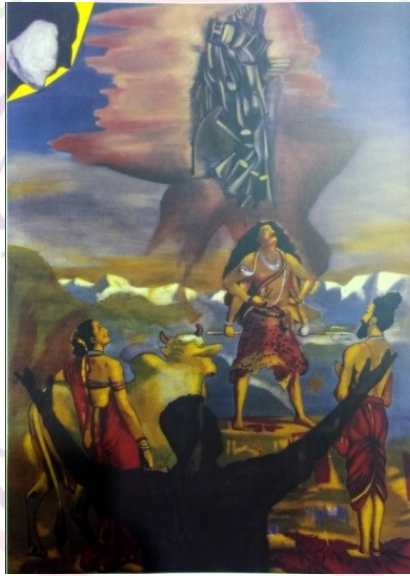
depiction of events. These need to be looked at to its social connection and political context to understand the realm of his art. The very part of the strategy is to keep a critical lens in this analysis which is necessary when analyzing art.

EXPERIENCE OF THEATRE IN PAINTING

The idea of his shutter series evolved out of his lifelong interests in theatre, which give him the scope of variation of scene he wanted to portray. With resemble of the theatrical backdrops these allow him to operate a conceptual space between painting, sculpture and theatre. These allow viewers to be active participate and connect their own stories while experience the work.

Atul Dodiya, an artist of intelligent representation; he cross connects the east-west heritage of art in a distinguished way and make it relevance with the contemporary time. Besides understanding the socio-political complexity through Dodiya's works, this paper also focuses its attention to critically evaluate the works of him in a pan-cultural context and bring forth the overlaps of cultural and artistic heritage of the world of art.

GANGAVATARAN: AFTER RAJA RAVI VARMA, 1998.



Oil, acrylic and marble dust on canvas, 84x60in.

This is a playful and hybrid descent of Ganga. Here Dodiya arms himself in a welcoming gesture in front of *Ravi Varma's 'Gangavataran'*, occupied the entire canvas. Here he replaced Ganga with Marcel Duchamp's 'Nude Descending a Staircase'. This depiction of hybrid mixture, Dodiya painted a theatrical parody and created a plurality of version. He connects himself with the tradition and revitalise with present and claims both Ravi Varma and Duchamp as ancestor. It is his way to representing work of art differently also connected with the roots.

MAHALAKSHMI, 2001.



Exterior: Oil and enamel paint on metal roller shutter.

Interior: Acrylic and varnish with gold powder on canvas and iron hooks.

It is one of his Shutter series work. It represents in theatrical way; it has two views; one-when the shutter is down and another when the shutter is up. The work represents in a satirical way and questions on bitter insight of surrounding reality of the society. One of its images Showcase the calendar representation of goddess Laxmi. As we worship motherhood, prosperity and fortune. The other image of the work is a black and white representation of three women hanged, are the victims of the practices of *dowry*; showing the darker side of the society. In this work, it represents artist's immediate reaction to the incident, with the simple naturalistic representation Dodiya made it easy understandable to everyone.

HIROSHIMA BUDDHA, 2001.



Exterior: Oil and enamel paint, on metal roller shutter with iron hooks, 108 x 72 in.

Interior: Acrylic and varnish with gold powder on canvas, 90 x 60 in.

This work portrays all the *Tamasic Gunas* (Bad qualities) such as cruelty, anger, aggressiveness and violent nature of human beings; and Dodiya speaks on these discontent that spread across the world in a sensitive way. On the exterior of the shutter Dodiya portrayed the Hiroshima Buddha icon, which melted in atomic destruction of Hiroshima city of Japan in 1945. And on the painting behind the shutter is the Buddha colossi of Bamiyan, which was blown up by Afghan Taliban in 2001. The cycle of the moon is topped on the shutter and on the painting, symbolized the dark hours of human civilization.



26/11, 2012.



Exterior: Enamel paint on Motorised metal roller shutter with iron hooks, 108x72in.

Interior: Oil, acrylic with marble dust and oil stick on canvas, hung on iron bar, 87.5x62 in.

26/11 is the date (day and month in 2008); when a group of Pakistani terrorists arrived by sea to attack several sites of Mumbai. The famous *Taj Mahal Palace Hotel* is one among them; more than 100 people were shot dead and several hundreds were seriously injured during the three days duration terrible attack.

Close Shutter: A black and white version of Munch's '*The Scream*' topped with a logo of Bombay's *Taj Mahal Palace Hotel*. Dodia's invocation of Edward Munch's '*The Scream*'-1893, is a universal icon of anxiety, grief and horror more over a public response to terrorism.

Behind the shutter a man is sitting in Yoga pose, he exhales to clean his breath against a fiery yellow background; he kept his open chest beside. The circle of fiery exhalation is an attempt to achieve balance between outer and inner world of one-self.

ANGELINA, 2006.



Enamel paint and synthetic varnish on laminate, 72x42in.

In this painting, Dodia paints his wife *Anju Dodiya* standing in front of Pop artist *Roy Lichtenstein's 'Drowning Girl'*. He connects the story with very popular Hollywood couple *Brad Pitt* and *Angelina Jolie* and related their personal story with the story of '*Drowning Girl*'

painting. Artist added short form of his name 'AD' (Atul Dodiya) with 'BRAD'. He assimilates Jolie's thought with Anju and with the painting.

CONCLUSION

Being a sensitive human being *Mahatma Gandhi* always remain a polestars for him, whose philosophy always guides him to find the path of life. He understand the relevance of Gandhi even today, that lead him to do a series of works on Gandhi, 'an artist of nonviolence' as a tribute to the father of nation. In Dodiya's own words "however, the idea of Gandhi remains strong for me, and there is still so much to be explored in Gandhi's philosophy and his approached to non-violence and love for fellow human beings. Under Gandhi's influence, I began to question the hypocrisy in our society." (Hoskote, Nancy, P-135). As Gandhi, Ramakrishna Paramhansadev and Swami Vivekananda also remain strong inspiration for him, he is an admirer of their simple philosophy, spiritual understanding and essence of life. The work '*Honey comb triptych -2000*' is his paying homage to these spiritual gurus, as they appear to him the purity of human minds.

As a socially conscious person his art expression questions the hypocrisies in the society at the various points of his artistic career. And on one such incident, his poem-paintings 'tears cape series' emerged on 2002 Gujrat riot that speaks in a sensitive way to the issues. This is Dodiya's own way to looking at the world; connects multiple references, intertwines the different aesthetics to create a third dialogue within his paintings.

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