

# A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TOWARDS ART PRACTICES- EMBRACING THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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## Abstract

This article advocates for a sustainable approach in sculpture education, recognizing the environmental impact of traditional sculpture-making processes such as stone carving, wood carving, metal casting, and ceramics. As a sculptor and educator at M.S. University, Faculty of Fine Arts, the focus is on instilling social responsibility in students by emphasizing the use of sustainable and eco-friendly materials. The essay discusses the inherent pollution generated by conventional sculpture-making methods and highlights the urgency to sensitize students towards adopting environmentally friendly alternatives. By guiding students to explore materials like bamboo, ropes, paper maché, mud, and cow dung, the article aims to foster a mindset of resourcefulness and creativity within the constraints of environmental sustainability. Through case studies illustrating the implementation of these principles, the article demonstrates the innovative use of sustainable materials in sculptures. Ultimately, the essay underscores the critical need for educators to lead the way in steering sculpture education towards a greener and more sustainable future.

Case Studies: 1 Bamboo Elegance, 2 Rope Resonance, 3 Paper mache

**Keywords:** Sustainable art practices, social responsibility, Sculpture education, Stone carving, Wood carving, Metal casting, Ceramics, Environmental pollution, Sensitization, Sustainable alternatives, Bamboo, Ropes, Paper maché, Mud, Cow dung, Resourcefulness, Creativity, Case studies, Innovative sculptures, green practices, Sculptor, Educator, M.S. University, Faculty of Fine Arts, Conscious choices, Environmental sustainability, Artistic decisions, Pollution reduction, greener future.

## INTRODUCTION

As a sculptor and educator at M.S. University, Faculty of Fine Arts in the sculpture department, I strongly believe in instilling a sense of social responsibility in our students. The role of art in society goes beyond aesthetics; it has the power to influence perceptions, provoke thoughts, and, importantly, contribute to sustainable practices. In this essay, I will discuss the importance of social responsibility in art practices, focusing on the use of sustainable materials in sculpture, and how I aim to guide and inspire students toward conscious artistic choices.

## OBJECTIVES

- **Expressive Role of Art-** Historically, art has been a powerful medium for expressing emotions, ideas, and cultural identities.
- **Expanding Social Responsibility-** Artists and institutions have recognized their impact on social issues and the environment.
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## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An article published in [eduartexperience.com](http://eduartexperience.com) on "Embracing sustainability in art – transforming creativity for a greener planet" discusses about Isabella De Almeida's art who is the founder of earthy Art. Here she talks about the concept of sustainable art and ecofriendly practices artist can adopt without compromising their creativity. This platform curates sustainable art that changes the mind, inspires action and protects the

environment and artist's health. **Gunjan Shrivastava**, founder of Stealth startup, a professional artist who wrote an article on "Sustainable art: Environmentally friendly practices for artist" says sustainability has become a movement and has taken every industry including art by storm sustainability is no longer an option but an necessity to ensure a thriving future for generation to come. **Miguel Sbastida** in an article called Sustainable practices in art making says "bridging the gap between art and sustainability means not only using recycled material and dimming the lights in an exhibition. It also means dealing with sustainable artistic procedure overcoming the traditional means and process of making a work of art.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

All these articles inspired me to work on my field which is mentoring art students at a university level in the field of sculpture. It made me think about how students can be inspired to do sustainable art I started exposing the students to artist like Olafur Eliason who transforms abandoned spaces into interactive spaces. Other artists like Kennedy Yanko who collects found objects and creates her installations. I also give references of Valson Kolleri, an Indian artist who works with similarly thoughts in Indian context. These gradually helped students to understand and appreciate Environmentally friendly practices. They themselves started documenting these and we created an archive. This archive was helpful in documenting my research process.

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN ART PRACTICES:

Artists bear a unique responsibility to society as the creators of visual narratives that shape cultural perspectives. This responsibility extends to the materials and processes employed in creating art. The impact of art on the environment, especially with the increasing awareness of climate change and ecological concerns, necessitates a shift towards sustainable art practices.

- **Guiding Students towards Sustainable Materials:** In the sculpture department, I aim to guide students towards the use of sustainable materials for their artistic endeavors. This involves fostering an understanding of the environmental impact of traditional sculpting materials like certain metals and plastics. Instead, I encourage the exploration of alternatives such as bamboos, ropes, paper maché, mud, cow dung, and other eco-friendly materials.
- **Creating Awareness:** Creating awareness among students is a crucial aspect of promoting sustainability in art. Through workshops, seminars, and discussions, I aim to shed light on the ecological consequences of certain materials and processes. By illustrating the potential harm caused by non-biodegradable materials, students can develop a conscious awareness of their choices as artists.
- **Fostering Conscious Artists:** The goal is to nurture conscious artists who not only create visually appealing artworks but also consider the environmental implications of their creative decisions. This involves encouraging students to think critically about the life cycle of materials, their ecological footprint, and the potential for recycling and repurposing in their art.
- **Encouraging Project-Based Artworks:** To further embed sustainability in art practices, I advocate for project-based artworks that utilize unconventional, eco-friendly materials. By assigning projects that challenge students to work with materials like bamboos, ropes, and recycled elements, they learn to appreciate the versatility and artistic potential of sustainable alternatives. This approach fosters a mindset of resourcefulness and creativity within environmental constraints.

## CASE STUDY: 1

### SIDDHANT KUMAR-MVA-I

Siddhant, master final year student is currently working with bamboo, which is renowned for its durability and widespread availability. It also holds a unique ability to evoke a sense of nostalgia for traditional practices

amidst the hustle and bustle of modern life. “Its eco-friendly nature and affordability make it a compelling choice for sustainable endeavors”- says Siddhant.

Moreover, bamboo's deep-rooted cultural significance adds layers of meaning to its utilization in various aspects of daily life. The rich history and diverse applications of bamboo serve as constant sources of inspiration for his work. From its use in constructing monumental structures to crafting delicate artifacts, bamboo's adaptability and accessibility make it an invaluable resource.

“Beyond its physical attributes, it's the philosophical implications of bamboo that truly captivate me. Its inherent connection to nature and simplicity resonates deeply with my artistic sensibilities, driving me to explore its potential in innovative ways” says Siddhant.



## JUSTIFYING THE MATERIALITY

Driven by the overarching theme of sustainability and cultural preservation, he endeavors to create a space where the vibrant traditions of tribal and folk cultures can be celebrated and preserved. He tries to shed light on the wisdom and ingenuity embedded within these traditional practices, which often surpass the conveniences of modernity.



Creating a huge mask with bamboo structure at Faculty of Fine Arts ground.

This is the first stage of mask making process using bamboo structure on which a layer of clay is added and then painted in vibrant colours.

## CASE STUDY- 2

### EXPERIENTIAL WORKS CREATED BY SHRISTI SINGH: IN HARMONY WITH NATURE.

Shristi builds places that not just make people feel amazed and thoughtful, but also help them find connections with themselves, others, and the world. Her installations aren't just for looking at; they're meant to be experienced. She draws people in, inviting them to use, play, and enjoy the space. Through using mud's natural

power and encouraging teamwork and sharing, creating opportunities for deep change and closeness for everyone who experiences her art.



Title: Walk through gallery. Medium: cob mix, bamboo and jute, Size: 14 ft, Year of execution: 2023

Shristi’s artistic vision transcends mere aesthetics; it encompasses the entire lifecycle, from its creation to its utilization by viewers. Each installation is meticulously crafted to offer an immersive, sensory experience, inviting participants to engage with their surroundings on a deeply personal level.

Shristi’s creative journey is guided by a profound reverence for nature and a commitment to sustainability. Through sculptural installations crafted from natural materials such as cob mix, bamboo, stone, rope, she endeavours to reignite the essence lost amidst the sprawl of urbanization. One of the cornerstones of her practice is the collaborative construction of cob mix houses—an embodiment of sustainable living and community resilience. These projects serve not only as eco-friendly dwellings but also as catalysts for collective action and environmental stewardship. Additionally, her background in sculpture extends to the interior design of these spaces, ensuring that their aesthetic appeal aligns harmoniously with their ecological ethos.



Architectural space using cob mix, bamboo, jute, 2022

“My installations aren't just for looking at; they're meant to be experienced. I want them to draw people in, inviting them to use, play, and enjoy the space. Through using nature’s power, encouraging teamwork and

sharing, I want to create opportunities for deep change and closeness for everyone who experiences my art.” says Shristi.

### CASE STUDY: 3

#### JAHANVI MISTRY-PAPER MACHHE

**Material:** Paper maché

**Theme:** Depicting the fragility and strength of nature and biomorphic forms, the use of paper maché underscores the recyclability and biodegradability of materials.

Exploring biomorphic forms through the medium of paper mesh offers a rich avenue for artistic expression and philosophical inquiry for Jahanvi. Her artistic endeavor reflects a profound fascination with the intricate interplay between form and function in the natural world. The tactile experience of working with paper mesh invites a deeper connection with the material itself. Each fold, crease, and manipulation become a dialogue between artist and medium, as you navigate its inherent qualities to bring forth new forms and structures. This intimate interaction fosters a sense of collaboration with the material, blurring the boundaries between creator and creation.

Through her artwork, Jahanvi not only captures the aesthetic beauty of biomorphic forms but also invite contemplation on broader themes of interconnectedness and sustainability. By embracing the humble materiality of paper mashe, she celebrates the inherent value of simplicity and resourcefulness in artistic creation.



Title: Untitled, Medium: Paper Machhe, Size: 3x3x6 feet

In essence, Jahanvi’s exploration of biomorphic forms through paper mesh transcends mere artistic expression; it becomes a profound reflection on the fundamental principles that govern life and the universe. Each piece serves as a testament to the endless possibilities inherent in the convergence of art and nature, inviting viewers to embark on their own journey of discovery and wonder.

At its core, this artistic endeavor reflects a profound fascination with the intricate interplay between form and function in the natural world. By engaging with paper mesh, you are not merely replicating organic shapes, but rather delving into the very essence of life's processes – growth, adaptation, and transformation.

The tactile experience of working with paper mesh invites a deeper connection with the material itself. Each fold, crease, and manipulation become a dialogue between artist and medium, as you navigate its inherent qualities to bring forth new forms and structures. This intimate interaction fosters a sense of collaboration with the material, blurring the boundaries between creator and creation.

#### SCOPE FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Importance of promoting social responsibility in art practices
- Role of educators in guiding students towards sustainable materials

- Need for continued awareness-raising efforts
- Suggestions for incorporating sustainability into other art disciplines
- Call for collaboration with environmental organizations and policymakers

### **SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND FINDINGS**

- Increased awareness among students about environmental impact
- Enhanced appreciation for sustainable materials and their artistic potential
- Development of resourcefulness and creativity within environmental constraints
- Successful implementation of project-based artworks using bamboo, ropes, paper maché, etc.
- Positive feedback from students regarding the shift towards sustainable practices

### **CONCLUSION**

Creating art is important but making people aware of creating artwork with environmentally friendly material is more important. Collaborative art projects can be done with environmental organizations and policy makers. In conclusion, the pursuit of social responsibility in art practices is paramount for the evolving role of artists in our society. As a sculptor and educator, my mission is to guide students towards sustainable materials, raise awareness about the environmental impact of artistic choices, and foster the development of conscious artists. Through these efforts, I aim to contribute to a generation of artists who not only create aesthetically pleasing sculptures but also recognize and act upon their responsibility to the environment.

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