

## IN THE ART FORM OF PERFORMANCE: MONALI MEHER

**Dr. Yogita Raosaheb Kandalkar (Kubde)**

Artist

Lecturer, Govt. College of Art and Design, Nagpur

Mail ID: [yogitakandalkar10@gmail.com](mailto:yogitakandalkar10@gmail.com)

### Key Words –

Conceptual Art, Performance Art, Monali Meher, Space, Time, Live Events.

### Abstract –

In 20<sup>th</sup> century Art media totally changed the entire purpose of Art. New media of Art cover the historical artistic movement that focuses on the conceptual strategies. Conceptual art challenges to the traditional art. It was first used to reference this distinct moment in an article written by Sol Le Witt in 1976, ‘paragraphs on conceptual art’. He said in conceptual art the idea or concept is most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art it means that all the planning and decisions are made before hand are the execution is perfunctory affairs. “Conceptual art is art in which or idea involved in the work take precedence over traditional aesthetics and material concern.”

There are many mediums tools and techniques are used in conceptual art. For example video, film, body art, land art, earth art, action, lights and performance. Especially performance art is one of the best expressive art media. Conceptual art work could not be easily bought and sold and did not need to be viewed in formal gallery situation. These biggest ideas come out of space and time. Conceptual art assets understand the gallery experience as never having purely visual but ideas can last forever. It comes true in performance art. It is the best, strong, an intelligent, beautiful and huge ambitious media for conceptual art. How it comes we can see in further description about performance art. Let see details about performance art. Performance art is an art work on art exhibition created through action executed by the artist or by other participants. It may be witnessed live or as we see definition of conceptual art.

The fore most purpose of Performance art has always been to challenge the convention of traditional forms of visual art such as painting and sculpture. Performance art borrows styles and ideas from other forms of art or sometimes from other forms of activity not associated with art

like rituals or work like task. It often involves interaction between artist and observes and the artwork which response to them.

In Performance art the six formal elements are time, space, the artist's presence, the artist's body, the interplay between the audience, the artist and the sound. It means performance focuses on live events. Performance is not about human action and scripted action only. It's also about the presence of objects and materials, traditional and industrial and certain kind of unpredictable activities.

There are many performance artists. Monali Meher, Nikhil Chopra, Soniya Khurana, Mithu Sen are artists who work on Performance Art. Nikhil Chopra works on narrative humor of a general subject for eg. daily life, dressing, shaving, eating, personnel narrative or stories, historical events, religious rituals, etc. An internationally emerging contemporary Indian artist Soniya Khurana represents her body as a complete Art form. It proves from her "Bird" (1999) performance. She discloses political issues, self dependence, sensitive issue of femininity / feminism and space through the body.

### Artist Introduction -

Monali Meher is one of the most eminent women artist in India who is beyond her times in practicing visual arts. Since 1998 Meher's art practice involves various disciplines. She is multilayered artist. The most significant one is 'Performance Art'.



Meher graduated in Fine Art from J. J. School of Arts, Mumbai. She participated in several international exhibitions and staged performances in places as Glasglow, Dubai, Arnhem, Istanbul and Venice. She also had several solo exhibitions in Amsterdam and in Newyork. During the Arezzo biennial in Italy in 2013 she received the Golden Chimera Award for innovation and creativity. She was a practicing artist in 2016, group show 'What we have

overlooked' at Framer Framed in Amsterdam curreted by Mirjam Westen. Since year 2000, she lives and works in Amsterdam, Netherland.

### Artist's Statement about concept of Performance art –

1. "Art" is the language, the body an expression, emotions, sound, pain, struggle, growth, change, statement something which stays with you in your memory and changes its form over a period of time".
2. I transform the nature of manner in which material react what shape or smell the produce what impact they make on my viewers and how the space around my art and audience gets transformed.
3. My art is usually time based and often reveals the process of creation. According to sites and the situations, my choices of material differ.

## PERFORMANCES –



In determination II, Gallery Mascara, Mumbai.

October 6<sup>th</sup> 2009, 6.00 Pm to 9.00 Pm, 3 Hrs. Performance.

Monali Meher's the Performance of determination is an action of peace cleaning. This performance is related to the incident in the Mumbai as well as violence and war in the whole world. "The world which is created by us to live in has the responsibility to create harmony and peace in determination." Monali says, "God exists, we don't have to invent him our mouth at least dares to prove god's existence. But peace does not exist on earth. Let's try to invent peace."

From this performance we remember Marina Abramovic's performance Balkan Baroque in 1997. But she uses rituals to explore her intentions and strategies. The uses of red water are only an indication of blood in the work of determination, dedicated to these who have lost their lives in the 2008 terrorist attacks on Mumbai. She mopped the floor of large performance space onto which red water continued to drip. The action of determination is an action of peace. A horrifying incident in her home city forced her to manifest the action of determination.

This performance suggests that, it has a poignant quality of change and transformation. Also the pain felt in this is not physical but it's a psychological; it indicated endurance. It was like a ritual of healing.



Umbartha (My Pune), at the Vida Hydari Contemporary Art Gallery, Koregaon Park, Pune, 2015

The exhibition encompasses two decades of Meher's works – wrapped objects, residual performance, autobiographical diagram and photographs. It is like a homecoming for her first solo exhibition in Pune to be able to present her work. It means this is the first time she is exhibiting in Pune.

Talking about this exhibition titled Umbartha, artist Monali Meher says; "Umbartha is a Marathi word for doorstep or threshold". That architectural block in our house is important as one has to cross it is more than a literal sense. Umbartha is dialogue between two spaces. This exhibition is a compilation of her immersive installation and performances each carrying the

essence of home, crossovers, change time, transformation and transitions. Umbartha is an exploration of ephemeral ideas of the threshold.

In this performance red wrapped Bows stretch the viewer's eyes to peel heights and nooks of space. The crimson thread is a primal root that links Meher's Umbarthas across time. In addition to wrapping and covering items completely to give them a second skin to appear mysterious and retain their original essence of being. She uses crimson wool to comment on the world's condition of tragedy in war and nature.

As shown in this Meher's performance, the identity of these objects is transported in to the artist's own experiment with self recognition and identity which representing the cities and nations where Meher has lived in over the years. These objects are also indicates layered with memory, place and time. The artist's life challenges, sense of duty, relationships, emotions, transformation and hope are symbolically represented through body and self-portraits.



Arctic Action VI, Longyearbyen, Svalbard, Norway

13<sup>th</sup> October to 27<sup>th</sup> October 2021, Performance duration 20 min.

In this performance Monali Meher spend 10 days on Savalbard at the Arctic Action Festival, during her stay she work on a sustainable Art Performance. Monali is wrapping a yellow, a green and a blue transparent tissue around an old rusty oven used for burning garbage in the past. She started wrapping objects in 2005 transforming, giving them new skin with the aim to make

emotions emerge from them. Wrapping in the sense of packing, symbolises moving from a place transition and transformation.

This performance shows that, it is a sustainable performance art by Monali Meher in which she didn't involve her body and the interplay between the audience and the artist.



GILDED, La Maison Des Arts, Brussels, France.  
Performance duration 2 Hrs. 45 Mins. 22.04.2023.



Gilded explore into the geological observations of nature traces its ruins, transforming landscapes and survival of holding onto what is left to protect. Meher manifest an act by merging herself into the space surrounded by several props, indicating organic growth with entangled waste components. An ambience created by environmental soundscape of windy storm transforms the space into a kind of ambiguous breathing landscape. Gilded means something covered in gold for appearance and protection. It also points out the ‘Gilded Age Era’ associating with political corruptions and exploitation of immigrant labour.

This performance addresses urgent issues such as sustainability, identity, migration, borders, barriers, loss and the endless cycle of exploitation of natural resources.

## Conclusion –

From all those performances by Monali Meher it is noticed that Meher works on Decay, hybridization and transformation, reshaping belongings, intimacy. She uses time as medium, which is extended assembled and captured. Means, 'Time' as a factor is central to her practice whether it's a wrapped object or performance. The aspect of continuity, repetition, duration, temporarily awareness, situation and public involvement are also inherent qualities that inform her art practice.

Meher tried to eliminate the contrast between art and life. But it seen also western performing art impact on Monali Meher's performance but it remains true to emphasize huge ideas. She perform well with all property of performance art time, space, presence and body performance art developed new thoughts that stimulate new ideas within the society.

She prove that Performance is not only about human actions only also she prove to transform the nature of manner in which material react what shape or smell the produce what impact. They make on her viewers and how the space around her art and audience get transformed.

It shows that her works reflect her personal life, they also indicate a global truth hidden in them, which make them a collective, universal in nature. Meher is an artist beyond her time in representing her innovative ideas in her performance through her vision. She inspires and touches soul of viewers. Meher worked with new materials / mediums to give new approach to her performance. She narrates her stories through her performance in new way in a unique sense which is more expressive.

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