

Teaching Patterns: Shifting Composition of Art Pedagogy in Andhra Pradesh Art Schools

Though the general structure of curriculum and values of art associated with representational skills and imageries are shared by the practices in different art schools, the pedagogical character of each art school differs from the other. Each art school evolves a discursive space about art practice in coordination with the students, teachers and the institutional infrastructure and by interacting with the influences outside this network.

The Andhra Pradesh I am referring to here is the undivided State of Telugu speaking people. It has five art schools, of which four are located in Hyderabad and one in Vishakapatnam. They are Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture and Fine Arts University (JNAFAU), Potti Sree Ramulu Telugu University (PSTU), Sri Venkateshwara (SV) College of Fine Arts, Department of Fine Arts Andhra University (AU) and Fine Arts Department in Sarojini Naidu (SN) School of Arts and Communication University of Hyderabad. As Hyderabad is the capital city, it attracted more attention of the aspiring students and state administration as well.

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The history of Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture and fine Arts University dates back to 1940 when Hyderabad was under the administrative rule of Nizam's government. It was formed by the Department of Technical and Vocational Education as Central School of Art and Crafts (*Markaje Madrasa Fununey Latifa*). Its curriculum was structured following the existing colonial arts and crafts schools and particularly the JJ School of Arts and Crafts, Bombay. Architecture was added to the syllabus little late, in 1949-50. In the 1956, after the formation of Andhra Pradesh state, the Central School of Art and Crafts was brought under the Director of Technical Education of the new government renaming it as the Government College of Fine Arts and Architecture. Between 1956 and 1972, when it had been merged with Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University (JNTU), craft section gradually faded away in the steps

taken to professionalize the skills and knowledge of arts practice. In 1981 architecture section is separated as School of Planning and Architecture with a separate principal, and in 2008 it is made into an autonomous university.

JNAFAU is the oldest of art schools in Hyderabad and erstwhile Andhra Pradesh that significantly contributed to the nature of Hyderabad modern art. From its inception, training skills and sensibilities to the students in their chosen disciplines had been rigorous particularly, in the attention given to the techniques of different conventional mediums. Techniques and mediums assumed an emotional form that guided the transformation of skills in the acts of art practice. The institution underwent several changes and quite frequently as mentioned above and thus effecting teaching practice. One of the notable moments for example is the late 1960s and early 1970s when some of the artists graduated from this art school went to Baroda for one year special diploma course under the guidance of an artist teacher in MSU. (1963 Lalit Kala Academy was established that offered fellowships). Returning from Baroda they have brought the ideas dominant at that moment to Hyderabad and could be seen reflected in teaching as well as in practice outside the art school. These developments were limited to painting and sculpture departments though. The departments of Photography and Applied Arts continued with the existing assumptions of training skills and incorporating new designing technologies.

By the end of the first decade of 2000s the art school underwent another significant structural transformation by becoming an autonomous university. As a result the art school, now called Jawaharlal Nehru Architecture and Fine Arts University, opened itself to new courses on the basis of “Public Private Partnership” which lead to a drastic increase in the tuition fees as well as the increased intake of the students. In the same effort, JNAFAU started offering MFA courses without any positive changes in the numbers and equipment of the faculty. In terms of academic and creative rigor, of both teaching as well as the practice of students, it added almost no difference to the larger picture of pedagogy of the

institute. Rather, I would say that it has affected negatively to the configuration of existing pedagogy technically and emotionally. However, this institute has occupied the primary position in the imagination of aspiring students of acquiring an arts degree, compared to the art schools that came after it.

Unlike JNAFAU which started with an emphasis on craft and technical education apart from art, School of Fine Arts in Telugu University, established in 1987, promised to encompass a wider cultural landscape of Telugu speaking people convoking the revival of regional identity. It was NT Rama Rao's vociferous insistence on the revival and research of Telugu culture, language and arts that resulted in the formation of a University dedicated to it. Existing Sahitya, Sangeetha, Nataka, Nritya and Lalitha Kala Academies, International Telugu Institute and Telugu Bhasha Samithi were merged into the University. So, the School of Fine Arts includes Departments of Music, Dance, Folk Arts, Sculpture & Painting, Theatre Arts, and Culture & Tourism. The method and nature of teaching practice and approach to training students in different skills is not any different from JNAFAU or other art schools in general. It was started as a three year degree course in Traditional Sculpture and later made into a four year course recognized by the UGC in 1990. If not the curriculum and teaching of techniques in painting and sculpture, the ideological framework of the university has been traditionalist and revivalist. The recruitment of faculty that graduated from the SN School with MFAs brought certain changes in the sensibilities and approaches to painting and sculpture making. But what is strikingly disappointing is the space of the studios that lack any inspirational incentive to the students' imagination.

Sri Venkateshwara College of Fine Arts is a private university, established in 1991, offering five year BFA degree in Applied Arts and Painting, headed by someone who studied painting in JNAFAU (Vani Devi is the granddaughter of late PV Narasimha Rao). The values of art and the themes of visual representation in painting are closely monitored and directed by the principal where faculty is made to transmit those values to the students. The ideas of creativity and visualization are largely drawn from the 'tradition' and

traditional art forms. And of course, tradition here is epitomized by “pure” Hindu past of Indian culture and history. Almost all the faculty members are working on temporary basis and frequent changes in the faculty hindered the discursive formation of art possible in the College. One striking aspect of this art school is that students from districts other than Hyderabad feature more in numbers. One reason could be the minimum qualification for Painting and Applied Arts courses is 10th class pass. Photography is offered as a three year degree and Architecture course is added in 2000.

Department of Fine Arts in Andhra University is established in 1976 as a five year course. The admissions of the students to the department were stopped after two years due to the lack of adequate number of teachers. The admissions were resumed in 1985 after recruiting some teachers but reducing the intake of students to 13 from 20. From 1990 the course is redesigned into four years and reverted to admitting 20 students.

SN School offers MFA courses in Painting, Printmaking, Sculpture and Art History and Visual Studies and is formed in 1988. It started with offering MFA in painting later added by Printmaking and then sculpture. Art History and Visual Studies stream is initiated from 2010-11. SN School has been planned as an interdisciplinary space where practices of different cultural and expressive forms of dance, performance, art and communication are taught. The students can take certain elective courses from any department along with the main discipline and explore the possibilities of interconnections and interactions. There is something called Other Medium introduced from sometime now along with the Main mediums that are conventional forms of painting, printmaking and sculpture. The otherness of the Other Medium has been the idea of opening a space for the students to explore artistic expressions in non-conventional mediums and materials. But the guiding and teaching resources do not match with the ambition and intension in initiating such a subject.

SN School has been the preferred institute by the graduated art students of Andhra Pradesh. As it is a central university, it attracts students from across the nation for MFA programs that opens a vibrant space for interaction among the students trained in different art schools. It enables certain self-reflexivity to some keen students in understanding and questioning one's own assumptions and manner of doing and thinking about art.