

Tribhuvan University

Contemporary Nepali Paintings: A Study of its Forms

A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement of the Degree of M Phil in English

By

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August, 2012

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Letter of Recommendation

This thesis entitled “**Contemporary Nepali Paintings: A Study of its Forms**” by Santosh Gautam has been completed under my supervision. I recommend it for acceptance and examination.

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Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Dr Arun Gupto, my respected supervisor, the lecturer of the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, for his scholarly guidance from its inception to the completion of this dissertation.

Similarly, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr Ammaraj Joshi, the head of the Central Department of English, Dr Anirudra Thapa, the M Phil programme coordinator, Prof. Dr Abhi Subedi, Prof. Dr Krishna Chandra Sharma, Dr Beerendra Pandey, Dr Sanjeev Uprety and the members of the research committee for their scholarly task for the approval of this dissertation.

I am grateful to the senior artists, Mr Kiran Manandhar, chancellor of NAFA, Mr K.K. Karmacharya, member secretary NAFA, Mr Shanta Kumar Rai, dept. of painting NAFA, and Mr Rabin Kumar Koirala, dept. of arch. and others arts, NAFA for their inspiration and cooperation. I am equally thankful to Mr Dhanu Yakkha, a senior artist and my colleague, who has ever been with me with his cooperation. I am equally thankful to Dr Yam Prasad Sharma, scholar and art critic, Mr Raju Manandhar, an artist and scholar, Mr Lokendra Hari Bhattarai, my colleague, for their commendable support in one way or another. Similarly, my sincere thanks are to those artists whose creations I have used as resources of my study.

I would like to offer my deep reverence to my grandmother and my mother for their consistent inspiration. Special thanks to my wife Bhawana Kattel, sister Tulasa and brother Avishek for their commendable support to complete the thesis.

Santosh Gautam

August, 2012

Abstract

Contemporary Nepali paintings are characterized by experimentation and application of unfamiliar forms; nevertheless, such novelty in formal properties is not meant for 'hollowing out' the contents. Rather most of the artists make their exploration and experimentation over the traditional motifs and socio-cultural idioms: contents are, therefore, renewed with artistic and aesthetic flavors. In this vain, unlike the western modern trend that has been oriented to the ethos of eroding out the burden of content to establish the independence of formal properties; the contemporary Nepali artists have dominantly adopted the formal properties as tools to experiment and explore the contents. Such unconventional, unusual, and innovative methods and techniques demand a prolonged attention to go through the formal properties, and this process renews the viewer's perception.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research entitled “Contemporary Nepali Painting: A Study of its Forms” is an attempt to probe into the issue of the contemporary Nepali paintings that are characterized by the individual, innovative application of various experimental, unconventional and unusual art forms. Even common subject matters are presented in peculiar ways. The viewer can perceive that the artists are using the formal properties of art such as dots, lines, colors, shape, proportion, etc. in unfamiliar way. Such attempts are directly concerned with the sensory perception of the viewers. The technical presentation and innovative use of the formal properties of the painting have become more dominant than the subject matter itself. The ‘howness’ of painting and its individuated and sophisticated application of the formal properties appeal the perception of its viewer and critics. Further, that act prolongs the perceptions of its viewers. This phenomenon of the contemporary Nepali painting leads to some questions for its perceivers: why have the artists given more focus to the forms than that of the contents? Why, unlike the traditional paintings, are the unfamiliar and deviated and innovative ways are applied in the contemporary Nepali paintings?

The major argument of the researcher is that aforementioned features are dominant in the contemporary Nepali paintings in order to renew the viewers’ perception. However, Nepali painting has the tradition of performance art: artists involving in their artwork in the direct involvement of viewers. The contemporary Nepali artists have demanded a thorough attention of the viewers. Despite the fact that modern Nepali paintings have borrowed the painterly elements, techniques and experimental properties

in their creations, the quest of the contemporary painting is not oriented towards 'hollowing out' contents from the forms of the paintings. The contemporary paintings require the viewers' more active role, sometimes as a participant in the work itself for getting the meaning, motivation and the issues of the paintings themselves. The sensory properties of the paintings invite prolonged perception and deautomatize the habituated experiences of the viewers. The traditional art has been means to serve some religious or spiritual idioms through the conventional form. Therefore, exactness of the representation is the success of the artist. On the other hand, the viewers always seek some artistic or aesthetic values in the modern painting. When the same thing is presented repeatedly, it loses its values, as it becomes the things like ordinary ones. The same thing gets artistic and aesthetic value when it is presented in an innovative way. Therefore, the contemporary artists give special focus to form to convey even the familiar subject matters in innovative manner to defamiliarize the viewers' perceptions. Their innovative uses of form are not only limited to the sensory values, but also are important properties to reach the crux of the content.

However, the European modernism of painting advanced ahead with the ethos of hollowing out the context so as to establish the independence of formal prospectus of painting: its implementation and outcome is distinct in different societies. In America, say for example, the experimental practices that ran after the 1940s gave high priority to the formal properties, but their private gestural paintings paradoxically leads them back to the exploration of primitive contents. To cite some examples De Kooning's projection of women gives the source of primitive vegetable women. Further, Twombly's gestural techniques has been compared to graffiti and "indeed it strongly resembles the crudely drawn pictograms and doodled images which mark the walls of public places". (Joselit, 39) Similarly, in Nepali painting too, the adoption of the western

formal prospectus does not necessarily mean the project for eroding out contents. Rather the contents are explored and experimented and an innovative way through the application of different formal properties of painting.

Form functions, but in a specific way. It not only opens the way to inspiration; it “can generate or discover ‘content’” (Necessity, 175). The form of a painting resides “not in the form what it represents, but in how it represents this form. Form is a matter, not of the ‘*What*’ but of the ‘*How*’ (Wollheim 132). In the contemporary Nepali paintings, unlike the traditional paintings that concentrated much upon the exposing of religious and cultural idioms symbolically and spiritually, the artists have used various unusual, experimental and unconventional forms and shapes in exposing religious and cultural idioms symbolically and spiritually as well as delivering their personal experiences and feelings to renew its viewers’ perception. The modern Nepali paintings are spiritual and secular, realistic and abstract, but forms are not meant to erode out the existence of content; rather forms are meant to create special artifact of the paintings.

For an artist audience is always in the center in the creation of art. The traditional painters were concentrated for the projection of some religious, cultural, or spiritual values so they fulfilled the pragmatic purpose. Its viewers’ role was passive in the sense that they were to share the same values. However, it must not be forgotten that the Nepali painting in the past has contained the heritage of performance art: the artist involving in their artwork in the direct presence of the viewers. After the advent of the western modern art techniques and practices through different trajectories, the viewers find some novelty in the modern Nepali paintings. The artists are concentrated to expose their individual feelings and experiences through the innovative use of colors, and techniques. Regarding such changes, Michael Robinson in the foreword of *Modern Art* states:

The creation of art has always been for an audience, requiring the viewers to participate at some level. Up until the twentieth century, the viewing effort was passive, requiring minimal effort since the artist had, invariably, created the anecdote within an illusionary picture space or on a plinth. The twentieth century radically altered that relationship with the viewer required to take a more active role, sometimes as a participant in the work itself, in unpicking the meanings, motivations and agenda of the artist or artists. (11)

Does this western artistic interpretation necessarily apply to that of the contemporary Nepali painting? It is apparent that the western modern painting was one of the reasons that it felt the burden of the socio-cultural representation. Against the long practices of the plastic art imposed by the realistic trends, the artists became experimental to establish the sovereignty of art itself and to renew the experience of the viewers. But, on the other, Nepali painting witnessed the rays of modernity with the flow of realistic art. In this ground, the contemporary Nepali painting has a distinct base for the practices of modern paintings. The contemporary Nepali painting does not necessarily erode out the presence of the contents: both the traditional motif and realistic representation; at the same time, different techniques and experimental practices are adapted in it.

The question, 'which is more important in form and content?' is a debatable question. Content has been considered as a dominant factor until the advent of formalism as one of the theoretical categories to look into fine art. It is because art was considered as a subject matter of iconography that is a branch of history of art, which concerns itself with the subject matter, or meaning of work of art, as opposed to their form.

This is the result after the concept of art comes out of the representation of narrative and symbolic impulses oriented by the religious and cultural patterns. Unlike the traditional artists who molded themselves with the strict cultural pattern, the new artists are rather free in their expression of subject matter. They express their subjective feelings with their distinctive techniques and experimentations. However, this does not mean that the traditional art has not at all been influenced by the waves of the global modernity. Promina Shrestha writes, “Today traditional art form survives with elements of modernization. Artists maintain the basic rules of iconography and lines drawing but introduce their own style, motifs and interpretations of the religious philosophy”(94). In the same way, unlike the traditional art viewers who anticipated the representation of their spiritual and cultural idioms when they perceive the artworks, the contemporary art viewers anticipate to perceive the experimental novelty in the art works.

Speaking from formalist point of view, we can find experimental use of pigments and formal properties play significant role in the making of the art works. It is because the artists are not necessarily bound with certain obligatory social responsibilities that their creations should reflect some religious or cultural idioms. Therefore, we can find the application of movement and rhythm, unity and variety, emphasis, proposition and balance in the making of the artwork. Similarly, we can find the interplaying of different elements of arts such as dots, line, shape, form, space, texture, color, value, intensity etc. However, this does not mean there are no such formal properties such as forms and structures in the traditional Nepali paintings. Their meaning and representational characteristics of paintings are entirely determined by the work’s history of production.

The contemporary painting is not just merely an effort to artisanal sobriety, but it is also distinguished by its openness and inclusiveness of temper and attitude. It begins to make a break with many well-tried conventions and habits, ostensibly to a broader arena that comprises both the traditional motif and modern experimental practices. The works of any contemporary artists are studied according to the new techniques that the artist discover and share, and according to their arrangement and development of formal properties of painting.

The artists create artfulness in a painting by the appropriation of different formalistic properties in an artistic way. Form refers to that of the structure and of the manner in which they are united to create its distinctive character. The form of a work is what enables us to apprehend it. Form also refers to an element of art that is three-dimensional (height, width, and depth) and encloses volume. For example, a triangle, which is two-dimensional, is a shape, but a pyramid, which is three-dimensional, is a form. Cubes, spheres, pyramids, cone, and cylinders are examples of various forms. The elements of a work of art have their independent meaning, too. Formal elements are primary features which are not a matter of semantic significance -- including color, dimensions, line, mass, medium, scale, shape, space, texture, value; and the principles of design under which they are placed-- including balance, contrast, dominance, harmony, movement, proportion, proximity, rhythm, similarity, unity, and variety. In its widest sense, it is the total structure; a synthesis of all the visible aspects of the concerned artwork.

The contemporary Nepali paintings remove the automatism of perception in several ways. The artists renew the perception of their viewers by using various mediums

of colors, drawing related techniques, painting related techniques. They make artistic use of visual elements and principles of design. By the application of such properties the contemporary paintings, the artists have defamiliarized the traditional perceptions of its viewers. In doing so they have made application of numerous types of color mediums such as encaustic, fresco, tempera, oil, water colors, gouache, acrylic and local colors. Similarly, the visual elements of paintings such as dots, line, shape, value, colors, texture, pattern, space, motion are technically applied. The viewers can see the innovative application of the artistic principles such as unity, symmetrical, asymmetrical and radical balance, emphasis and sub-ordination, scale and proportion, rhythm, movement etc.

The above discussion so far deals with the importance of form in the understanding of contemporary Nepali painting. Now, the following discussion throw a light upon the practices of the contemporary Nepali painting that is aware of the traditional heritages and modern global practices.

1.2 Pre-Modern to Contemporary Nepali Painting: Tradition and Contemporaneity

There is a general tendency to see from the lenses of the western modality of modernity to map out and define the modern Nepali painting. This sounds natural in the sense that modernity in Nepali painting is the situation only after the western art practices-realistic to experimental- travelled here through different trajectories. The development of the western modern painting and that of Nepali modern painting share different contextual base to each other: The western modern painting is dominantly resistant to the realistic tradition of painting, on the other, modern Nepali painting is experimentation over the traditional and realistic painting. The former is projected

towards hollowing out the content as resistant to the realism, whereas the latter uses different innovative techniques to highlight the content through aesthetic and artistic devices of painting.

The European journey of modernism is a rejection to the long practice of realistic trend of painting. Manet introduced impressionism that rejected the notion of plastic arts. Since then, the artists practiced through different dimensions and experimentations that was far from the restriction that painting should be verisimilitude to the real object. One of the main thrust of modernist trend was to 'hollow out' the content, and to establish form as a self-sufficient component of painting.

The way the western project of modernism was as a reaction to the exact representation of the realism by establishing the self-sufficiency of formal properties of painting. Does it necessarily have the same journey in context to the Nepali painting? For this, one has to go back to the time when the Nepali artists began adopting the western forms of art in their techniques, concept, application and experimentation. Interestingly, Nepali artists were introduced to the western art tradition through the realistic paintings. The journey of modern Nepali painting begins after the Nepali artists were familiar with the plastic art, whereas modernism is a project as a reaction to realism in Europe. The realist paintings in Nepal brought forth secular human issues and natural objects into the canvas with western formal properties, such as application of sophisticated brushes and pigments. Similarly, artists applied perspective, three dimensionality, the effect of light and shade and other compositional effects in their paintings. It was Bhajuman Chitrakar who accompanied with Junga Bahadur Rana's visit to Europe; and after his visit to Europe, he composed some portrait of some prominent members of Ranas. But his

paintings reflected less European strands and “more with later Rajasthani or intricate mogul school.” (Nepali Art, 80) Arrival of a British art scholar-Brian Hodson stimulated the practice of realistic painting in some Nepali painters, such as Rajman Singh Chitrakar. Later realistic painting became a dominant mode of painting, for Nepali artist could go to India to take academic course in painting. Some of such artists were Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, Chandraman Maskey, Amar Chitrakar, Manoharman Pun, D.B. Chitrakar and so on. These artists were realistic in technique. They experimented both in traditional subject matter and modern secular one, too.

No longer had the realist painting got a convention into Nepali painting, the modern expression- the painting that is technically deviated from the realistic representation appeared with the first exhibition (1959) of Lain Singh Bandel, who was educated in France. Still there are some controversial debates that Gehendraman Singh Amatya also came with such experimental trend of painting even earlier or at the same time that of Lain Singh Bangdel.

According to an the catalogue of an art exhibition that was hosted at Park Gallery Lalitpur on January 9-31, 2013, some artists of the sixties were; Ramananda Joshi, Shashi Shah, Vijay Thapa, Uttam Nepali, and Indra Pradhan. Some artists of the seventies were; the artists of the seventies were; Batsa gopal Vaidya, Krishna Manandhar, Govinda Dangol, Pramila Giri, Sarada Chitrakar, Madan Chitrakar, Radheshyam Mulmi, Karna Maskey, Shyamlal Shrestha, K.K. Karmacharya, and Shankar S Suwal. Similarly, some artists of the eighties were; Ramesh Khanal, Gautam Ratna, Mukesh Malla, Surendra Raj Bhattarai, Birendra Pratap Singh, Kiran Manandhar, Raghini Grela and so an.

This research deals with some of the representative paintings of the above artists and the artists after eighties, as well. These paintings of new expressions are unconventional and distorted in their form; still they are not projected for the sense of eroding out contents from the canvas. One can see advancement in organization-material, representational, structural, expressive, and thematic elements. The artists have academic back up for the designing of formal properties of paintings. The artists can be expressive for the adaptation of different unconventional methods and techniques; nevertheless, their project is not hollowing out the content. Rather the contents-religious, secular, socio-cultural, natural, individual- have been expressed experimentally with effort of creating artistic and aesthetic beauty.

Now the following discussion would deal with the opinion and findings of different art critics and historians. In the comparative study of *paubha* painting, Promina Shrestha rightly mentions that art in Kathmandu valley has been deeply rooted in religion, religious philosophy and myths. “Historically art was used in spiritual pursuit of enlightenment and served as a narrative, depicting myths, folklore, religious philosophies and more deep rooted *trant* affinity”.(93) Therefore, the viewers were supposed to see the work of art in reference to religious or cultural patterns of the society. Previously established representational and narrative contents dominated the form.

The art of painting of Nepal recorded of some two thousand years, as Madan Chitrakar states, shares the characteristics of “spiritual in theme and idealistic in presentation”(11) that remained unchanged. If art becomes nothing more than a cultural event, then it adversely compromises the way in which art can be appreciated; its critical appreciation will be conditioned by surrounding socio-historic circumstances, which will

avoid consideration of art work as an independent entity. Despite the fact that traditional Nepali painting incorporates a legacy of its spiritual, and socio-cultural dimension, its value system remained entangled within its socio-cultural circumstances. But the condition gets changed after the fifties that marks the beginning of modern art in the history of Nepal. A systematic beginning of transformation appeared only after the appearance of painting based on the norms of western schools in the mid twentieth century circa. Such gradual shift in Nepali painting resulted in the inclusion of the contents other than religious imagery. The new artists began to adopt their subject matter from the nature, human activities, their state of being, and so on.

Moreover was there not only the adaptation of new subject matter, but also the artists borrowed the western forms and techniques in their paintings. The new artists began to adopt the “concepts of tonal effects, colors and the most important- the application and the use of modern paint mediums like oil, water, charcoal, pastel etc.” (ibid, 11) The contemporary artists have started to explore their creative impulses in a number of ways such as art of daily life, sacred realm, social order, storytelling, here and now (spontaneity), human experiences, invention and fantasy, art and nature, art and art and so on. In art of daily life, the artistic impulse is expressed as much through objects created for daily use as it is through images and architecture. Often these objects carry meaning far beyond their practical functions. The arts of sacred realm have been created to provide settings for rituals of worship and prayer, rituals that formalize between the earthly and divine realm. In the art of social order, the painters have depicted the different social realm of our society. Actions in motion are depicted in the art of here and now. The deeds of heroes, lives of saints, and folk tales are collected in the art of storytelling.

The art of human experiences encompass the human experiences such as happiness, sorrow, loneliness, despair etc. Imaginative and dream like vision are artistically depicted in the art of invention and fantasy. In art and nature, we find stylistic projection of nature. Similarly, the sensuous appeal of color and lines play dominant role in art and art. Despite the fact that there are in numerous themes and subject matter, their art forms are motivated by the impulse of novelty in their art forms. Broadly speaking, content dominated the form in the traditional painting whereas the form has dominated the content in the contemporary paintings. So the viewers are suggested to go through the form, techniques and application of colors in the modern paintings. The art shifted from the pragmatics of religious and spiritual horizon to the subjective, realistic and experimental one. Dina Bangdel highlights the painting of Lain Singh Bangdel that:

His works have the universal appeal that unites both his personal vision with his immense creative genius. Much of his imagery is derived from natural sources, but nature that is interpreted and rendered through the artist's own perception and imagination. His style is marked with its own distinctiveness. (13-14)

Contemporary Nepali artists have given an ample emphasis on foregrounding of forms. Many artists have totally experimented with colors in abstract fashion. Their artwork is totally deviated from the verisimilitude of the everyday socio economic reality. However, some artist have painted under the realistic subject matter, they have made innovative use of form, technique and colors. Inspiration of the global modern art is reflected in their paintings. Lain Singh Bangel in the exhibition catalogue of Amar Chitrakar's Paintings states that:

A new movement of art was active from the sixties and seventies in Nepal. Avant-garde artists who worked in the western style were trying to break away from the conventional method, experimenting with new forms and techniques and obviously heading for art nouveau.

Not only novelty do we find in the contemporary Nepali painting, it is also characterized by the application of different genre of fine arts such as sculpture, painting and literature. The conventional perception of the viewers is defamiliarized with such experimentations. We can notice the implementation of inter-art relation in the paintings of Uttam Nepali. He presents vision and textuality in the same canvas blurring the boundary between painting and literature. Abhi Subedi expresses his renewed experiences of Nepali's paintings in his art catalogue as below:

The main thrust of his modern paintings is the spirit of inter-art. From the beginning, he has sought to bring the cumulative experience of artists who use different mediums, from words to colours in his canvas. He projects the themes that carry the sensitivity of experience, environment and peace as represented by the Buddha. His field of action is canonically defined and his paintings are executed in oil and acrylic medium. ("Confluence")

None can deny the fact that the advancement of global modernity has left no country untouched. Besides the traditional painting a new form of painting, called the traditional painting has emerged with its innovative application of formal properties. This is the result of the change in the perceptual attitude of the viewers. Modern art carries the direct or indirect burden of having aesthetic beauty in it for the viewers are aesthetically encherished with the work of art only when they find novelty in their habituated

perception. Therefore, form becomes dominant in serving such aesthetic beauty in the artwork. We can find an ample use of formal properties in Nepali painting. Regarding the innovative use and application of new art forms in Nepali painting, a western art critic Julia Hegewald generalizes that the western art media has brought a great change in Nepali painting. The critic further states:

The employment of new materials, colours, techniques and themes has brought drastic change to traditional painting in Nepal on several levels. In terms of material, the artists have switched entirely to white western paper, dismissing the local rice paper, used for the Newari gouches in earlier times, as unsuitable for water colours and as non-durable. They experiment with oil colours, charcoal, pencils and pestles. (96-97)

The critic sees the contemporary Nepali painting as a replica of the global modern painting. The innovative application of techniques and adoption of different style of Nepali paintings by different artists have been interpreted as a product under certain artistic trend and ism by some critics. Raju Manandhar, an artist and researcher of Nepali painting compares the paintings of Kiran Manandahr with that the paintings of two American abstract expressionists. He comments, the paintings of Kiran Manandhar expresses:

[...] inner feelings through abstract expressionist form. Unlike most western abstract expressionists like Jackson Pollock and Mark Roathko he always returns back to anthropomorphic plural form. He uses the splashing and dribbling techniques of Jackson Pollock. The flowing plural colours on the canvas suggest the spontaneous evolved without pre-plan of

the artist. The artist gives final product. Manandhar merges the Pollock's technique with another abstract expressionist Willem de Kooning. The spontaneous brush strokes resemble the Koonings's. As Kooning presents us monstrous and challenging modern woman, in Kiran's works also a female figure emerges out of flowing rhythmic colours and sweeping brush strokes. But the female figure is not as comfortable as in realistic representation. Kiran's canvas demands the viewer's imagination and exercise to derive aesthetic pleasure (20).

Despite the fact that his paintings are characterized by the features of spontaneity and fluidity in forms just like that of the early phase of abstract expressionists, generalization of his individual artisanship under the rubrics of the western trends and isms certainly foreshadows the subjective innovation explored in the canvas. But the application of colors and its use as well as the organizational skills of the artist lays a great significance for the art critic Abhi Subedi. About the paintings of Kiran Manandhar, he mentioned;

[H]is paintings are most dynamic works ever seen in the domains of modern arts in Nepal. He makes constant experiments in styles, mediums and themes in his painting. The strongest point about his painting is the inner dynamism, the energy that is shown by the brush strokes, visible and invisible lines primary colour forms that move round the canvas and create a universe of experience and imagination. The movement starts from the centre and the energy flows within and beyond the sphere in these open canvases as it also moves within. With the combination of the charming,

striking colours, lines and anthropomorphic forms he has executed these powerful painting on Nepali paper canvas prominently with acrylic medium. The energy that he creates not only gives joy and energy to the viewers but also poses challenges to those who want to see a definite answer to the questions that these works tend to give rise to.

(“Confluence”)

The dynamic movements of the form echo to the rhythm of creative experience. The open-ended forms give way to the multiple significances. However, the anthropomorphic form is always apparent, because the traditional Nepali paintings are always anthropomorphic, the presentation and significances are always different.

However, the artists were experimental borrowing the global modern innovations, they were not totally deviated from their tradition which gets reflected through artistic devices, such as symbols, metaphors, images, paradoxes, wit and so on. Some artists have projected physically over the canvas whereas others have done it intentionally. They have succeeded in establishing a new style. Manuj Babu Mishra comments on contemporary Nepali art:

The contemporary art of Nepal today is proceeding with various trends. Some artists are akin to reflect national identity in art, whereas others look interested to assimilate some prevailing trends from outside world to give out a unique creation. However, the trend of contemporary art of Nepal can be summed up with conclusion that fresh and renewed attempts have been made in art through different media to give expression to the powerful feelings of mind. (“Contemporary” 22)

Regarding the heterogeneity of the contemporary Nepali painting, Yam Prasad Sharma in his Ph. D. dissertation sees the state of being hibridity- a situation propelled by the present global art media and technological innovation-as a crisscross of the spacio-temporal phenomena. He considers;

[...] Nepali painting of the present time as a mixture of subject matters, contents and forms from various cultures, past and present and thus produce native creations. Since many such cross currents interact to produce the text of Nepali paintings, we can delve into the nature of tradition of paintings as habridity, negotiation and appropriation. Such plural nature however cannot be traced with definitional correctness because of two reasons. Firstly, fleeting, continuous and ever-changing art influences in the time of globalization unsettle in the representational modes, and secondly Nepali art in general, and painting in particular, is going through a phase that still needs critical theorizing about the nature and features of its creative representations. Such conditions do not limit a discourse on Nepali painting, but it provides scopes to interpret Nepali art freely and fluidly to theorize its nature with interpretive terms of reference. Consequently, there may be conceptual play, provisionalism, and indeterminacies involved in developing a theory of artistic representation. The focus of the study takes such indeterminacies into consideration. [...] This thesis thus discourses on three things in particular: it studies intertextuality by looking at hybridization, negotiation and appropriation. (1,2)

The conclusion of Sharma's research states that the contemporary Nepali painting can be considered as the product of the western tools and traditional contents. In the same way, Raju Manandhar in his M Phil dissertation comes to the similar type of conclusion. In the abstract of his thesis paper, he states:

Contemporary Nepali paintings reread and reinterpret the traditional art works like manuscript illuminations, *paubha*, *patachitra*, wall paintings and sculptures. The images, icons and symbols of these early works are reformulated and reintegrated in the paintings of our time. The structure of *mandala* and religious subject matters are also recycled. While doing so, the contemporary Nepali artists exploit the western techniques like impressionist, expressionist, cubist, abstractionist, surrealist and abstract expressionist as tools. As the artists share native tradition as well as plural western art forms, the resultant art works appear to be open-ended. Their significances are not certain and fixed but contingent, multiple and provisional. They speak of cultural self and cultural other. The art works are interconnected not only to its tradition but also western arts. The artists appropriate both western canons and native tradition to express their feelings and emotions in response to the present socio-political context (4).

The above review of different artists, researchers and art critics, no doubt, excavates different dimensions of recently growing contemporary Nepali paintings. Broadly speaking, their critical standpoint can be divided into two categories. First, those critics and art researchers who see it from the prospective of the current global

prospective, and regard it as a replica of the global modernity, or as the hybridity of the current situation. Second, those who study the work of art from biographical-historical prospective where the personal life of the artist becomes important for the interpretation of his artistic works. Further, the writings of different art magazines reveals the fact that historical and biographical criticism becomes the dominant mode of contemporary Nepali painting.

The study of the artist's life and his time has become the subject of study for the visual interpretation and for the determination of authorial intention. The artist's individual and social life becomes the matter of concern for the interpretation of his artistic works. The painter's diaries, letters and other biographical accounts are collected for authorial intention. In its most extreme form biographical historical criticism seems to examine the biographical and historical contexts of the paintings instead of examining the painting itself. The domination of this kind of tendency in Nepali painting in fact has lead the individual artisanship reflected in the artwork under the shadow. It is the fact the contemporary painting that are primarily meant for the artistic supremacy and innovation, but they are meant for expressing their representational or intentional subject matter in a creative way.

This research, therefore, finds relevancy to study the formal properties of contemporary artists. It is because artistic composition is the result of a complex interplay of different formal properties of paintings, such as dots and lines, outlines and contours, light and value, colors and its way of application, texture and pattern, space, time and motion, and so on. Such formal properties are further delved into unique artistic design. The shape, lines and application of colors may create unity and variety, symmetrical,

asymmetrical and radical balance, the artistic emphasis over the sub-ordinates by foregrounding certain aspects. Similarly, scale and proportion, rhythm and movement, time and space are also the matters of study in the paintings.

In my study, painting itself becomes the area of interpretation and discussion of a piece of artwork. Life and times of the artists and the spirit of the age in which an artist lives are certainly of interest for the art historian. This study does not make use of such information to analyze the painting. It is because the formalist interpretation believes the assumption that for the pure knowledge of the painter's intended meaning is always unavailable. It is the form whose scansion further leads to the meaning. Therefore, meaning is within the visual text, but not outside in the historical or biographical references of the artist or the perceiver. It is the form that eventually leads to the content. In this vein, the prominent formalist critic Clement Greenberg in his essay "Necessity of 'Formalism'" opines that "[...] form not only opens the way to inspiration; it can also act as means to it; and technical preoccupations, when searching enough and compelled enough can generate or discover content"(175). The forms of the paintings-the choice of the elements of painting and the arrangement that create aesthetic and artistic experience is inseparable from the content. How the visual art means is inseparable from what it means. For the form and meaning of the visual art usually develops together like a complex living organism whose parts cannot be separated from the whole.

In a visual text, the formal properties work together to establish its particular theme or the meaning of the artwork as a whole. As a visual art is the sum total of a number of formal properties of painting, it has multiple layers of components to analyze.

Such formal elements sometimes cohere and sometime contradict within or among themselves so as to produce meaning from their relationship.

The project concentrates upon the formalistic study of the contemporary painting. The word contemporary is rather a flux terminology. Still the concept contemporaneity for the present purpose refers to the time after the 50s and onwards. It is whence the Nepali society witnesses the waves the global modernity in every respects of the society. There are a number of modern painters with their voluminous number of paintings. This research would take some representative paintings after the 50s available so far.

Regarding interpretation of the visual texts, this study conducts a close study of the text themselves with the assumption that a visual text is self-sufficient for its origination of its meaning. Therefore, there will be a type of documentation of the visual texts concerned. Further, the researcher anticipates that such interpretation of paintings would be a support for the art viewers to go through the visual text in a systematic way. Now, the subsequent section would deal with formalism as a discourse for the theoretical base of the study

Chapter 2: Discoursing on Formalism

In aesthetics and art criticism, the term 'formalism' is used to denote many different contexts. Formalism, as Dziemidik states, may mean "a methodological orientation in art studies, a specific conception of an artwork, or a position taken on the theory of value and valuation of an art work." (185) Similarly, Carroll refers formalism to "the important writings of Clement Greenberg" in art criticism, "school of Russian Formalism" in literary history; and in art history, "the writing of Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin" (109). A connection exists in the three basic perception of formalism proposed by Dziemidik: It can be viewed as a methodological attitude, formalism entails, explicit or implicit a specific conception of an art work, which in turn entails a specific instance on the theory of value and valuation of the work.

Regarding the development of formalism, the initial impetus was provided by the futurists whose artistic efforts before the First World War were directed "against decadent bourgeoisie culture and especially against the anguished soul searching of symbolist movement in poetry and visual arts". (Selden, 9) The futurist opposed both the symbolist and realist view of art. They emphasized the artist's role as a producer of crafted objects. An artist, Dmitrev declared, "[...] the artist is now simply a constructor and technician, a leader and foreman. (ibid 9)

From the above background set by the futurists, the formalist critics started producing the theories of art- literature, painting, architecture, music-concerning with the artist's technical prowess and skills. They avoided the proletarian rhetoric of poets and artists, but they retained a somewhat mechanistic view of the literary process. In general, emphasis on form parenthesizes concern for the representational, imitative and cognitive

aspects of arts. Art is no longer viewed as aiming to represent reality so as to impart moral or intellectual lessons, but is considered to be an autonomous entity consisting of its own internal artistic and aesthetic aspects that no longer require external supporting definitions. Nor does it carry any necessary burden of society-moral, cultural and so on.

Regarding the historical tendency of modernist art, for many of the artists and critics engaged in this modernist pursuit, there was a hidden teleology driving their will to purity- a sense that painting has before its certain goals to which it is directed by its very nature and to which the artist is compelled to bring it. From the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, Greenburg in *Art and Culture* writes, “the painter’s first task had been to hollow out an illusion of three-dimensional space”(qtd. in Quigley 146). Beginning with Manet the space has rendered shallower and shallower until there was no room left for anything but the paint itself. This reduction of pictorial space to nothing but a painted surface was heralded as yet another purification of painting according to the modernist law of elimination of the inessential. Painting, it was thought, had been liberated from illusion and had finally asserted itself as ontologically independent of representation and depiction. The purity of painting with a minimum of pictorial baggage reaffirmed the primacy and integrity of line, color, paint, and surface as elements of painting.

In the modernist pursuit of purity and autonomy of art, it has been characterized by a dominant feature of rebelling with the concept of plastic art, in other words to hollow out the concept of three-dimensional space. Therefore, some artists defamiliarize the objects presented to produce a bizarre effect, or some artists make special application of symbols. Similarly, the experimental use of colors and techniques in an innovative way is another mode of being deviated from the realistic painting.

The formalists believe that human content (emotion, ideas and reality in general) possess no literary significance in itself, but merely provided a context for the functioning of the artistic devices. Here, it is quite relevant to mention that formalistic trend influenced the entire disciplines of fine arts, such as, literature, painting, architecture, music and so on. Further, formalism as abstract trend appeared in the 50s and whose origin dates back to the early twentieth century vanguard. This was a movement that rejected the spiritualism of the artists such as Malevich and Kandinsky. Despite the fact that formalism gives focus to formal aspects, different tendencies and diverse aspect of art work are included in it. Therefore, it ends up seeming ambiguous and complex. Its dominant feature is austerity, as well as geometric component that unite form and content. Formalist art, however formal properties of art were foregrounded under different movements and 'isms' by the artists from the beginning of the twentieth century, was introduced as such in 1961 when the American art critic, Clement Greenberg published "Modernist Painting" a study in which he claimed that Minimalism was the maximum expression of formalism with its rejection of all the emotional elements. He believed that art should exclude social or existential concerns that would supposedly compromise artistic autonomy as well as defile the aesthetic purity of visual art.

Primarily, formalism is characterized by domination of form to context. Form refers to that of the structure and of the manner in which they are united to create its distinctive character. The form of a work is what enables us to apprehend it. Form also refers to an element of art that is three-dimensional (height, width, and depth) and encloses volume. For example, a triangle, which is two-dimensional, is a shape, but a

pyramid, which is three-dimensional, is a form. Cubes, spheres, pyramids, cone, and cylinders are examples of various forms. Also, all of the elements of a work of art independent of their meaning. Formal elements are primary features which are not a matter of semantic significance -- including color, dimensions, line, mass, medium, scale, shape, space, texture, value; and the principles of design under which they are placed-- including balance, contrast, dominance, harmony, movement, proportion, proximity, rhythm, similarity, unity, and variety. In its widest sense, total structure; a synthesis of all the visible aspects of that are applied in painting. Due to the flexibility of formalist discourse form is understood a number of ways in painting. According to Dziemidok, formalist study, form is used in the following four ways:

1. [...] form may describe the means and ways of representing and expressing that something.[...]
2. The form may be understood as a certain arrangements of parts, a structure of elements, or a global composition of elements of a work of some other object.[...]
3. Sensual qualities may be treated as the formal aspects of an artwork, if by “form” one means those things that are directly and sensually perceived in the work. This definition holds non-artistic phenomena as well.[...]
4. Finally, theoreticians sometimes take “form” to signify not some significant aspect or side of an art work, but the art work itself, in which the formal elements (in the narrower definition) and elements of contents are united into a certain organic totality, into a certain self contained structure abstracted from the world.[...] (186)

As forms are interpreted differently in the understanding and application of formalism as a mode of study, different writers and critics understand formalism distinctively under a variety of names. Such distinctive formalisms are described here with brief introduction of them. Dzemidok makes a distinction between artistic formalism and aesthetic formalism. He states;

Artistic formalism is a stance claiming that the artistic value of an art work, that is, the value of an artwork as an artwork, is constituted exclusively (or primarily) by the variously understood form of the work. The non-formal aspects of the work (its material and content aspects, or its cognitive, historical, social, etc. significance), on the other hand, have no or no significant influence on the artistic value of the work. Aesthetic formalism, on the other hand, is a body of ideas according to which the aesthetic value of natural or created objects (or state of things) is determined by its form understood as visibly (sensibly) perceived overall appearance of the object or the arrangement of its parts. Objects have the ability to generate aesthetic experiences because of their external appearances. (189)

Similarly, Whitney Davis divides formalism as high formalism and historical formalism as below:

High formalism (often identified with the criticism of modern arts) can be defined by the reification of pure formality, the promotion of close reading, and the decontextualization of the “object” its disaggregation from the archeological and architectural assemblages in which all artifacts

are usually found. It is avowedly subjective. By contrast, historical formalism (often identified with the archeology of art in pre-modern and non western traditions) attempts a hermeneutics of integrated aspect seeing in the past-including the constitutive historical subjectivity of formality produced by the makers of artifacts in question-that proceeds methodologically from the formalities we can see when we organize artifacts according to explicit morphological typologies and series. It is provisionally objective. (8)

In terms of theoretical understanding and application of formalism, Wollheim divides into normative and analytical formalism, and manifest and latent formalism respectively. Normative or regulative Formalism is a theory about how painting should be. It holds that they had to be organized in a certain way if they are to be of value; and that is organization is what we need to take account of, and is all that we need to take account of, in coming to access or evaluate them. Analytic or constitutive formalism is a theory about how paintings essentially are. It holds that necessarily they are organized in a certain way, and that this organization is what we need to take account of, and all that we need to account of in coming to understand them.

Given the distinction between the formal and non-formal properties, Zangwill divides formalism as extreme formalism, anti-formalism, and moderate formalism. Extreme formalism is a view that all aesthetics properties of work of art are formal. The extreme formalist believes that all aesthetics properties are narrowly determined whereas an anti formalist believes that they are all broadly determined by the history of the works production as well as its narrow non-aesthetics properties. Moderate formalism makes its

theoretical base on the assumption that only the formal properties or their relationships are the factors for aesthetics beauty.

Despite the fact that formalism is charged of being one sided on giving excessive focus to form, it has contributed the development of art itself, and in particular to the understanding of uniqueness of individual art forms, to the defense of the right of art to have autonomy and innovation, and to the defense of the exploration and achievements of modernist art. The influence of formalism is found in all forms of fine arts. Specifically, modern painting was benefitted from the advance of the formalism. Formalist critics such as Bell, Fry, and Witkiewicz, contributed to the elimination of prejudices and unjust criticism of the painting of van Gogue, Gaugain, Matisse, Pacasso, and Braque. Such formalist criticism facilitated the acceptance of the modernist art, and very positively contributed to the artistic, and aesthetic education of the society. By explaining the values unique to painting, by developing the sensitivity of the public to those graphic values, and by perceiving, experiencing, and valuing the purely visual- painterly, sculptural, and architectural- values of the visual arts. They made it easier for the public to understand not only the modernist graphic arts, but also graphic art in general.

Formalists of the first half of the century (including literary formalism-Russian formalism, the Prague school, and New Criticism) were a justified and effective protest against the then-current one- sided tradition in artistic criticism and scholarship that did not sufficiently respect the autonomy and uniqueness of art. The tradition they rejected was characterized by enshrining realistic ideals in art, bourgeois-Victorian interpretation of art, and Victorian moralism. The representative of this tradition expected literature and other forms of art to enhance the morality of the society and to defend national values,

and to advance certain social and political goals. Hence, they frequently tended to treat an artwork as a means to extra-artistic ends. Another part of this tradition was a primitive psychologism or sociologism in critical and historical analyses, in which the artwork itself was sworn of its primary importance.

Roughly speaking, the history of painting from impressionist artist such as Manet through synthetic cubism and Matisse may be categorized in terms of gradual withdrawal of painting from the task of representing reality – of the reality from the power of painting to represent it- in favor of an increasing preoccupation with problems intrinsic to painting itself. It was the result of “the alienation of the artist from the general preoccupation of the culture in which the artist is embedded, and the prying loose of the art itself from the concern, aims and ideals of the culture”. (Vogel 272)

Formalist denied art as a servitude to the social aspects such as moral, social, national values and so on. Formalists were fully justified in their protest against treating an artwork as a substitute for politics, morality, or religion, and against treating it as a means of ideological indoctrination. They claimed that their predecessors attached art criticism and art studies to external conditioning of art, and ignored the artwork itself and its formal aspects. Such notion was incapable of presenting an adequate art theory in general.

In the twentieth century, revivals of the formalist conceptions of art and artistic values are usually connected with a revival of avant-garde artistic movements consisting primarily in formal innovations. Specifically this situation existed in the USA in the wake of the Second World War. Each time formalism accompanied avant-garde explorations, providing the artist with theoretical justifications. It explained their aim to the public

from objective point of view and protected them against unjust criticism. It also defended the autonomy of art, its right to formal experimentation, and it defended the uniqueness of individual art forms. In turn, the avant-garde movement too supported the base of formalism by questioning and destabilizing the traditional aesthetic belief. Highlighting the contribution of the formalistic painting in the late 1940s, Quigley states:

With the emergence of the New York School of abstract painting in the late 1940s, there came an attitude to picture making that placed an increasing stress on the formal elements of art. Concern for the picture qua picture prompted artists and critics to reflect on the nature of pictorial features such as shape, line, color, and surface texture and to think of them as the determinants of picture making. In the theory and practice of painting, the peculiar nature of painting, the peculiar nature of paint itself became an element to which the painter must respond or risk exclusion from the modernist discourse. Pure painting was painting that respected those pictorial elements that made them in some sense the subject matter of art (146).

As it becomes apparent, that formalist study helps even in the systematic development of iconography, which is considered as counterpart of formalism. The following topic deals with moderate formalism that states that study of the aesthetic properties is possible in any type of painting irrespective of its class, i.e. representational, contextual or abstract.

2.1 Moderate Formalism: Formalism Strikes Back

Zangwill characterizes formalism in terms of aesthetic / non-aesthetic determination. He assumes a fundamental principle that “aesthetic properties are determined by non aesthetic properties” (Feasible 610). By the determination of aesthetic properties by non-aesthetic ones, it has a conjunction to the non-aesthetic proprieties if it has an aesthetic value. Then which non-aesthetic properties are responsible for determining aesthetics proprieties? The answer of this question depends on the type of the fine art. In case of painting, such formal properties are the visual ones such as lines, colors, shapes on their surface etc.

Regarding the distinction between formal and non-formal aesthetic proprieties, the formal property refers to the sensory properties. Non-formal aesthetic properties, by contrast, are “thought to be those aesthetic properties that are determined in part by the history or context of work of art, such as artists’ intention in making it, or the wider aesthetic cultures or social circumstances in which it was created” (ibid, 611). Further, he says that formal properties are those aesthetic properties that are determined solely by sensory or physical properties. This refers to “those aesthetics properties that are directly perceivable or that are determined by the properties that are directly perceivable” (ibid). Nevertheless, some regard all the aesthetic properties such as biographic, historical and cultural factors as constitutive for the aesthetic beauty.

Moderate formalism makes its theoretical base on the assumption that only the formal properties or their relationships are the factors for aesthetics beauty. To finesse this confusion, he divides the non- aesthetic properties into two: narrow aesthetics property and broad aesthetics properties. The narrow includes “sensory properties, non

relational physical properties and also any disposition to provoke responses that might be thought to be partly constitutive of aesthetics properties. The broad covers and things else” (ibid). Formal properties are entirely determined by narrow non-aesthetic properties, whereas non-formal aesthetic properties are partly determined by broad non-aesthetic properties.

In the above views on formal and in formal aesthetics properties, the concept of extreme formalism, anti formalism and moderate formalism differ. Extreme formalism is a view that all aesthetics properties of work of art are formal. Anti formalism is a view that none of them are formal. The extreme formalist believes that all aesthetics properties are narrowly determined whereas an anti formalist believes that they are all broadly determined by the history of the works production as well as its narrow non-aesthetics properties.

Further, the moderate formalism is the view that while some aesthetic properties of a work of art are formal; others are not. It concedes that there are some formal properties even in contextual and representational art. In order to have strong consolidation over non-formal aesthetics properties, Zangwill links this idea to the Kantian concept of “free” and “dependent” beauty. He links non-formal aesthetic properties in terms of dependent beauty and formal properties in terms of free beauty (613) A thing is dependent beautiful if it is beautiful as a thing with a certain function. In case of dependant beauty, a thing is beautiful as a thing with certain function. If a work of art is of dependent beautiful, its beauty is determined in part by the functional properties that were bestowed on it by a certain history of production. In particular, artist’s intention

is the source of the function. The concept of free beauty is attached to the formal properties of the work of art.

Formalism as a critical theoretical practice initiates along with the art practices that tried to replace the representational realistic paintings. Futurist and surrealist painting in the beginning of the twentieth century set forth the journey to the non-representational artwork, which ushered to the abstractionism. Such art works were expressionist in nature. They gave emphasis to the formalistic aspect, such as experimentation in color, forms, etc. Dadaism was the common name for such experimental form of art. The Dadaist rejected the conventional practices and came up with their new form-often radical and shocking. In such context, however the art form were quite insensible and uncommon for the art viewers, the formalist critics authenticated them entering into formal aspects of such painting. Viewers got the understanding of the upcoming art form. Therefore, the experimental practices and formalism as an artistic formalism went hand in hand.

Nevertheless, with a due course of time this movement got a setback. The Dadaist movement, which is experimental in terms of its formal properties and technique of experimentation, was replaced by neo-Dadaist movement such as the minimalist and conceptualist technique. Further, the non-representational expression in art form led to the practices of painting out of the arena to that of environment so as to blur the dichotomy art and real life. This is the point where formalism got a serious obstruction in its critical practices.

Moreover, the hay days of the formalism got an official censorship from the uprising communist regime in Russia. Nonetheless, literary and artistic practices were

continued in one way or another. Many of its practitioners shifted to free societies where the autonomy of art was respected or at least they did not have to face an official censorship.

After the Second World War, a great artistic movement ushered in the US under the banner of abstract expressionism. Some of its forerunners were Jackson Pollock, De Kooning, Newman, Still, Rothko, Krasner, Gorky, Frank Stella, Kapraw, Frankthaler, Twombly, Ad Reinhardt and so on. They experimented on color and with their techniques. They dedicated for the autonomy of art. Their movements were supported by formalist critics such as Greenburg, Michael Fried, Rosalind Krauss and so on.

However experimental practices of formal properties of art within the arena of canvas waned with the neo-dadaist movement that catapulted to the art form such as conceptualism and environmentalism that challenged the dichotomy between art inside the arena of canvas and life outside it. Even in such context, the formalists raise a question, "Is there no form in art?". This question further leads them to the revival of formalism- not in the classical conception as such-but in the revised conceptual outlook known as moderate formalism.

The following discussion deals with Zangwill's defense of moderate formalism against the anti-formalist argument that Walton deploys in his paper *Categories of Art*. Zangwill agrees with Walton's argument that extreme versions of formalism do indeed create insurmountable difficulties. An extreme version of formalism makes the proposition that the aesthetic forms of art are only the formal properties that are non-representational and non-contextual in nature. Nevertheless, Zangwill never argues with the anti-formalist standpoint in *Categories of Art* and understanding of aesthetic properties

in it. Further, he shows that the moderate version of formalism is most adequate for the understanding of art.

The major point of moderate formalist is a restriction of the claim that aesthetic property are formal to only a subset of aesthetic properties. He concedes that an artwork containing representational and contextual features is intractable to formalist analysis. The authentic properties of such works typically depend upon what is being represented in the work, and on its relations to those works that provide context. However, the history of production is not ascribed upon its sensory properties; the appropriate aesthetic appreciation of those works requires knowledge that extends beyond the sensory surfaces.

In response to the above anti-formalist claim, Zangwill does not make a sharp objection, but he points out, although many aesthetic properties of those works are non-formal this “does not show that there are not some or even many works all of whose aesthetic properties are formal”. (qtd. in Parson, 21) the first part of this position is the idea that there is a class of art work that are non-contextual and non-representational. Zangwill uses the terminology “large and significant” to denote the class. A glance of the history of artwork reveals that only a certain period, there was production of such artwork. In the rest of the time, there was domination of other form of art works such as representational, non-contextual and so on. Besides their contextual or representational aspects, they have also the basic formal properties. Therefore, the domain of formal such formal properties are beyond the classification in art form under certain categorical trend or ‘ism’.

Despite the fact that Zangwill admires the argumentative subtlety of Walton, he makes his proposition that a refutation of Walton’s proposition is necessary in order to

establish the viability of moderate formalist view. Walton's theory of appropriate aesthetic appreciation involves two claims, "a descriptive psychological claim and a normative philosophical claim". (Parson 23) The first claim is the belief that a work of art under a category affects our perception of it and that the aesthetic judgments are the category dependent. By category, Walton means artistic kind based on media, genre, styles, forms, and so forth such as cubist paint, abstract painting, etc.

For categorization, Walton introduces three forms to denote the non-aesthetic perceptual properties. They are standard, variable and contra standard. Standard is the category, which is typical or characteristic in that category. It is variable for the category if its present is irrelevant to that category, and it is contra-standard for a category if its presence tends to disqualify things from belonging to that category. To put into another words, a property of an object is standard for an observer if that property is standard for some category under which an observer views the object. It is variable for the observer if the property is variable in the given category, and it is counter standard for the observer if it is counter standard in the given category. This is how the aesthetic properties of a work of art seem to strike us aesthetically on the ground of which of its features are standard, which variable and which contra-standard.

In the above discussion, Walton's anti-formalist standpoint claims that we affect the status of its perceptual properties for us, and this affects the aesthetic qualities that we judge it to possess when we perceive an object under different categories. Since knowledge about the categories to which an art work belongs is knowledge that extends beyond the sensory surface of an object.

Further, Walton proposes six kinds of aesthetic properties that he thinks are category dependent. Zangwill in his seminal essay *In Defense of Moderate Aesthetic Formalism*, deals with each of the kind of properties, and postulates his claims that category dependent anti-formalist analysis of Walton has some problems. Hence, moderate formalism is the appropriate way to view the artwork.

In the following discussion, Walton's category dependent aesthetic properties along with Zangwill's comments are discussed now. Walton's art categories are six types: a) representational, b) being dynamic, violent or lifeless, c) displaying order, inevitability or correctness, d) being lyrical or energetic, e) possessing tension, and f) being shocking or disturbing. Zangwill concedes that the first and last of these are genuine cases of category dependent. He thinks that the remaining four kinds are not true cases of category dependent. He criticizes these four putative examples of category dependence.

Order, inevitability, stability, correctness and unity are category dependent for Walton because their presence in the work depends upon seeing the work in a category for which certain non-aesthetic perceptual properties are standard, rather than variable. When we watch a certain piece of art under a category, it is supposed to have a certain aesthetic qualities that we typically perceive it to have. Zangwill contests this. According to him, we can perceive an art piece easily if we are familiar with the category. However, the perceiver who knows nothing about the category, then he interprets through the formal properties independently. He fails to find the dependent properties of correctness, appropriateness and familiarity. Zangwill argues that those properties are not aesthetic. Walton's sense of familiarity does not show that in order to ascribe aesthetic properties to

a work of art we need to perceive it as partaking in a genre which subsumes other things. Therefore, Zangwill says that being introduced with the art category; we will certainly feel the sort of familiarity that Walton describes. However, it is not obvious that the sense of familiarity is aesthetically significant. Therefore, Zangwill's point is that instead of obtaining the qualities of correctness, order, inevitability, stability and unity from the certain art categorization that is historical in nature, the perceiver should obtain those qualities out of the interplay of the different formal properties reflected in the particular art piece itself.

Similarly, another aesthetic property depending on the range of variable non-aesthetic property is being lyrical and energetic. According to Walton, it derives not merely from the absolute speed of the art piece, but from the fact that it is fast for that particular medium. So being energetic is the category dependent aesthetic quality. He gives example of music. Zangwill responds that the state of being lyrical and energetic should be judged out of an organized complex whole of the individual painting. He refutes Walton's ideas that the lyrical and energetic properties, for example, a violin can be obtained from the concatenation of thousand types of piano notes. He further precedes his formalist point that without being familiar with the art category, the state of being lyrical and energetic can be obtained out of the relational situation of different elements of an artwork.

Another aesthetic property that Walton uses is tension. He defines its authenticity being dependent to the art category that will help the perceiver to decipher the standard properties. Zangwill has the opinion that the sense of tension is not the category

dependent aesthetic property, but such tension and resolution exist within the paintings themselves as an integral part of it.

Being dynamic, violent, or lifeless is the aesthetic property proposed by Walton. He deals with this property in reference to the society that does not have an established medium of painting, and produce a kind of work of art being influenced from a standard global model such as Picasso's *Guernica*. The flatness in the original could be variable for the members of other society. This would make a vast difference between the aesthetic reactions from society to society. The qualities of violent dynamic could be lifeless in another context. Zangwill's response is to be categorically neutral. We should make judgment about the intrinsic aesthetic nature of things without knowing about their relational properties i.e. their aesthetic category they are divided into.

This is how Zangwill contests different types of categories dependent aesthetic properties proposed by an anti-formalist Walton, and advances the idea of moderate formalism that carries the prospects as a tool for the appreciation of art and paintings. After establishing the relevancy of the moderate formalism, which is applicable for the study of any painting regardless of its type. The following topic would deal with the study of the formal properties in the case of pictorial organization.

2.3 Applying Formalisms in Pictorial Organization

Medium has become message. Today, Plurality in the nature of pictorial organization has resulted to multiplicity in the assumption of formalism as a mode of critical discourse. In the contemporary painting, form has become a way to reach the message that a particular art piece conveys. Such forms are formulated differently. When one perceives a number of contemporary paintings, he notices that some of them

are deviated from the reality, some are complex to decipher meaning, some just the play of colors. Similarly, a number of artistic techniques are applied to create forms in the canvas. Such forms could be clear or opaque, real or deviated. In such context, a viewer faces some challenges on, what should the criteria be for the measurement of the formal properties; and how he should decipher the formal properties.

The first question further heads to two ways, if one should interpret the formal properties how much it is deviated from the standard norms the painting is supposed to have; or one should interpret such properties the way it is mentioned. The latter path leads to the analytical formalism and the first one to the normative formalism. In terms of theoretical understanding and application of formalism, Wollheim divides into normative and analytical formalism as below:

Normative or regulative Formalism is a theory about how painting should be. It holds that they had to be organized in a certain way if they are to be of value; and that is organization is what we need to take account of, and is all that we need to take account of, in coming to access or evaluate them. Analytic or constitutive formalism is a theory about how paintings essentially are. It holds that necessarily they are organized in a certain way, and that this organization is what we need to take account of, and all that we need to account of in coming to understand them. Sometimes-and more often than not, inexplicably, an analytic formalism has temporal limits set to it. So we are told and make sense of it, that what it says holds true necessarily of and solely of, paintings made in certain period or between certain dates or by certain painter (127)

As it is apparent that “formalism” is a literary (artistic) mode of interpretations of painterly works based on their objective formal properties, so theoretically it bases on the analytical formalism for the self sufficiency of the text but it is not always possible to be analytical when the painting is related to the normative issues. When an artist creates a picture of which form is already familiar to the art viewers, they would bring their information to decipher the form of the painting and make their judgment how much exact or how much the art is deviated from the real one. Wollheim brings the example of Roger Fry who analyses the painting of Peter Breuget: Christ Carrying the Cross to Cavary. Fry criticizes the painting for the way it is chattered up by a certain amount of unclarified details to which the eye are unable to bring any order. In this saying “Fries shows himself to be at once a Normative and an Analytic Formalist”. (ibid) Fries shows himself to be normative formalist when he thinks that the values of Breughel’s painting depends solely on such issues as whether some elements in a painting makes a significant contribution to its spatial unity. Nevertheless, Fry shows himself to be an Analytic Formalist when he thinks that in talking about in such crucial elements, it is perfectly adequate to describe them. He is an analytic formalist to the extent that he thinks that descriptions entirely in terms of shapes, pattern or configurations that can do justice to the pictorial aspects of the painting without introducing the further facts about the opaque objects. Fry is normative formalist when he interprets the opaque objects bringing references from the story of Christ.

This is how Normative formalism and Analytical formalism, though they different interpretative stances, sometimes come together for the formalist analysis of a painting. However, it is true in case of non-figurative painting one can be analytical formalist; but

one happens to be both normative and analytic formalist in the figurative paintings for they are related to the certain norms that is already familiar to the perceiver.

On the face of the above normative and analytical formalism, there are two general methods open for the formalists. One is the method that takes account of the formal, measurable and visible properties. Second is the method that goes beyond the formal properties to see the inter-relational aspects of those properties.

The methodology that depends on the operational method for studying the formal properties of paintings is the manifest formalism. Moreover, the methodology that deals with the study of the elements of painting that have an organic unity is the latent formalism. Regarding their distinction, Wollheim states,

For Manifest Formalism, the forms that contain the essence of a painting are forms observable across its surface. In principle, they are isolable from the rest of the visual array so that they can then be exhibited, by means of a diagram, or other forms of depiction, for our attention. [...] By contrast, for latent formalism, the forms essential to painting are not observable across its surface. They underlie the pictorial surface, from where they have to be retrieved-and once they have been retrieved, they are capable only purely abstract formulation. They cannot be directly exhibited or depicted. (130)

A manifest formalist depends on the visible lines that we can see. We can have the physical depiction of the picture's form. Though it sounds simple and attractive, it is very complex to carry out. This process has two related difficulties on how the operation is supposed to be carried out or what rules govern it. These are the difficulties not only in

the ways of abstracting the form of the painting from the painting itself, but also in the way of that other task in which we might expect assistance from the operation: our coming to understand what form is. We know forms are primarily created by lines and colors, which are sometimes deceptive. Sometimes lines do not necessarily form shape and form, but sometimes forms are created without definite visual lines through the specific artifact and color adjustment of the artist. Therefore, the manifestation of the visual forms of the paintings and their observation do not always lead to the proper formalist study of the paintings. Manifest formalism falls in confusion when the two dimensionality of the painting is applied to give the impression of three dimensions. In this vain, Bernabei is rightly states, “Forms, when reduced to pure optical perceptual tools that are neutral and lacking in meaning, attach themselves with difficulty to psychological and historical contents, form which they seek to receive meaning”.(12) At this situation, the formalist should not only take consideration of the formal properties such as lines and shapes that are visible and measurable, but they should also possess the perceptual capacity of seeing in.

So long as we think of forms of the painting as something manifested, we have to give up the idea that it is two-dimensional because we can reach the three or four-dimensional object the form depicts. Exceptional cases apart, we must take account of the representational content in identifying the picture. Here, the representational content must not be confused with the figurative content. The representational content of the painting derives from what can be seen in it and can be brought under non abstract figurative content derives from what can be seen in it and can be brought under non abstract

concept. Even in abstract painting, there are some representational content. To find out the representational content one has to discover the organic properties of the painting.

It becomes apparent that even if the traditional formalists rejected the relevance of connection between form and representation, the moderate formalists see the existence of the formal properties even in the representational painting.

When the representational content is found acceptable, a formalist has to go beyond for a new operation for extracting the form of the painting from the painting. Here, instead of getting form, the inter-relationship between different properties has to be discovered and analyzed as organic whole. The formalist enters into the form of the painting. He is not concerned with what it represents but how it represents.

A formalist enters into the realm of the latent formalism when he realizes that the forms that constitute the essence of painting are not always observable forms lying on the surface, but are forms that somehow underlie what is to be seen by looking at its surface. They have to be excavated. Latent formalism views that the form of the painting lies in its underlying syntax. Painting can be regarded as a visual text. It has an organic unity. A formalist has to excavate through parsing.

The process sounds similar, but it is not as easy as the syntax of language for studying the organic unity of the text. It is because, as Wollheim states, linguistic syntax maintains certain criteria. Language contains units that have certain class, and they maintain the logic for their coherence and cohesion. However, a painting does not always follow such rules because an artist has a liberty to go beyond the convention in terms of application of different properties of painting. Latent formalism believes that all signs can

be arranged into sub-system, and each sign in such a system means just what not all other signs mean.

The above mentioned structural based diacritical account sometimes remains inadequate because a painting is organized for an end, but this end is an end idiosyncratic to the artist, and does not derive from organization itself. Still the door of moderate formalism is open there because even if a painting is expressed in a bizarre way, such as lacking of organic wholeness contains the quality of defamiliarization. The 'howness' of its study still gets relevancy for the study of its formal properties. As it becomes apparent that according to the line of moderate formalism form is the compulsorily existing property in any form of painting.

This is how the above discussion of general discourse of formalism, moderate formalism and its relevancy, and the formalism and pictorial organization throw light on the significance of the formalist study and an appropriate model for studying the aesthetic and artistic properties of paintings. From the study of moderate formalism, it becomes apparent that a painting can also contain other elements more than the formal properties. The subsequent chapter makes a close-up study of some of the selected contemporary paintings.

Chapter 3: A Close-up Study of Contemporary Nepali Paintings in Particular

(Fig. No.1) Lain Singh Bangel's gauch painting entitled 'Old Man and Stupa' depicts an old man in front of a stupa with the domination of blue pigment over the yellow and white ones. Compositionally, the painting does not maintain a strict symmetrical balance. The body of the old man is slightly stretched on the light portion and the stupa on the left of the canvas; still the artist has technically maintained a balance with the tilting of the head to the fore. The dimensional effect is created with tonality of the pigments. Thick and thin application of color displays depth and surface respectively. As there is domination of blue pigment, the contours of the stupa and bust of the man are created with the visible linings, a technique of the traditional painting.

The painting violates the direct theory of the realistic painting: First, the artist has emphasized upon the man by placing him upon almost one third of the canvas, still the artist does not depict the exact representation of face. The eyes are still and hollow. The lines are blurring and dim. The backdrop contains three layers almost dividing the canvas into three equal portions. Second, the painting does not follow the logic of light and shade. The circular dome of the stupa and the bosom of the old man are smeared with snow-white pigment. The pure white color inside the blanket sounds quite unreal from realistic point of view, still the artist has used it conceptually to equate with the purity of the stupa. Third, directly pigments are smeared in a flat way to show the linings. Similarly, the painting violates the linear perspective with the display of the backdrop

with flat application of pigments into three layers, yet the stupa is smaller than the man to suggest their distance between them.

In this way, the painting is experimental to the fact that it violates the logic of a realistic art. The choice and application of pigments suggest the concept of the artist, instead of a realist representation. The tilting of head towards the stupa denotes submission to the stupa.

(Fig. No. 2) The oil painting 'War or Famine Life Goes on' by Ramananda Joshi deals with the subject matter in an expressionistic flavor. The painting makes a bizarre projection of a pair of man and woman, and a water buffalo against a jagged surface. The domination of black and brown color creates an unusual setting. However, the compositional structure suggests the reality; the application of color is quite unfamiliar. Two human bodies sitting over a water buffalo is clear to the viewer. Nevertheless, they are displayed in unfamiliar way, the human beings in blue pigment and the buffalo in brown one. The real beings are projected into the unreal world.

The painting is conceptual, and it is suggestive to the title. The horrible setting corresponds to the concept of war or famine. The domination of horizontality facing towards the left bottom of the canvas pervades throughout the painting. The placement of the water buffalo, linings in the land and the water, the hair of the woman are rhythmic in order suggesting the continuity in the movement. The very movement contrasts to the animal's and the people's rib bones that are vertical. The projection of bones highlights the intensity of famine or hunger.

The painting makes use of unfamiliar artistic features, such as the choice of color, composition of the backdrop. The artist seems to be doing so to intensify the title War or Famine Life Goes on.

(Fig. No. 3) Shashi Shah makes expression with his constant and stylized iconic horse in his painting entitled 'Buddha'. His painting presents an eerie specter in which Buddha rides with timeless flying horse that traverses the globe and the universe, its wild hoof beats and neighing drowning out the cries of the men, women and children who are in the state of meekness and suffering.

The painting is compositionally deviated from reality. The giant horse dominates the rest. The horse is land animal, but it is projected as a flying creature and a Buddha figure is riding over it. The figures in the paintings lack light and shade effect. The lines and contours are unfamiliar: they are circular instead of angular. The contours are stretched out of the figures that give an abnormal impression to the viewers. The artist does not mix pigments to create the dimensional effect in the painting; rather he makes a slight gradation of color value and use of brush strokes to create the dimension of the figures. The Buddha figure and the celestial horse are in standing and moving condition; and the human beings on the other hand, are either in sleeping or in sitting position.

In this way, the artist makes experimentation over the Hindu mythic theme of horse, which is believed to have carried the chariot of the Sun God.

(Fig. No.4) Indra Pradhan's oil color painting entitled 'Masks' makes experimentation with masks. A number of masks are depicted in the painting, so only the facial parts are projected there. Those masks are concerned to the Hindu gods, goddesses and deities. Green color dominates the canvas. Smooth blend of black, green and yellow

pigments have been smeared that look like floating clouds. The painting deals with the traditional motif with modern experimental techniques.

(Fig. No. 5) The oil painting “Untitled” by Uttam Nepali makes a smooth handling of colors and lines in the canvas. The delicate application of colors in a circular fashion from inward to outward dominates the canvas. The painting has a smooth background of blue color with a smooth gradation of light value from the bottom to the top of the canvas, respectively.

The central part of the painting is dominated by the smooth application of a number of circular lines resembling that of the fishes in the world of an aquarium. Despite having solid shapes, lack of angular shapes suggest the delicate projection of the non-figural shapes of the artist. The semi-circular shapes are of various shapes and sizes. The overlapping of the one to another adds dimension to the painting so as to lead the eyes of the viewers to deep down. All the lines having different colors overlap each other except the white ones. Though the lines are the smallest ones in size, they are the foregrounded ones so they remain untransacted in the painting.

This is how the painting simply plays with the lines and colors in a delicate way to engage the attention of its viewers.

(Fig. No. 6) Batsa Gopal Bhaidya’s painting Kali deals with the image of the Hindu Goddess Kali in her destructive disposition. Compositionally, the painting makes a blend of traditional and modern way of painting. The backdrop of the painting is conceptual. About two-thirds of the upper part of the painting is in black hue that violates a spatial representation. The traditional notion of two dimensions dominates the painting.

The upper part contains the black hue, then white, green, light red, blue and again light red lies to the other end of the painting.

The artist makes a symbolic projection of Kali goddess, for it lacks the body of the Goddess. Still the viewers notice the existence of the Goddess with the artistic projection of the weapons carried by Kali. The artist makes experimentation with different shapes: circular, linear, triangular, dome, rectangular. The weapons of the Goddess are projected on a pair of semicircular shapes. Seven weapons in each side represent fourteen hands of the Goddess. The viewers familiar to the Hindu legend notice that it is the massacre of demon by Kali when they see the head of buffalo on the right side of the painting, for the buffalo is the carrier of the demon.

The painting is the symbolic projection of the giant form of Kali. The viewers know her majestic form when they see the mountains in triangle shape just below plain land, soil, sea and again land to the end of the painting, denoted by white, reddish, blue and again reddish pigments, respectively.

(Fig. No.7) Krishna Manandhar in the acrylic painting 'Nature' explores a romantic landscape in semi-abstract fashion. The rhyming of the vertical lines in the south-left, of the painting gives blurring impression of trees. But the rest of it is quite formless. The delicate play of blue and green, blue and red results to comparatively darker hue, which further adds the depth of the painting.

The smooth texture of the white color with mild gradation in the side of the formless masses adds strange sensual quality to its viewers. Lack of color dabs and feathery smooth application of color gives the special impression to its viewers from closeness to the far away.

Therefore, despite having the painting semi-abstract in nature, the colors and shapes do not represent any objects as such but rather create a flourish and rhythm in association with feelings and emotions.

(Fig. No. 8) The painting entitled Sun and Moon by Madan Chitrakar makes experimentation of the bi-triangular Nepali flag. Originally, the Nepali flag contains blue-bordered two triangles, and white colored crescent and sun against the blood-red background on the top and bottom of the triangles, respectively. The painting contains soft red rectangle on the top and soft blue square on the bottom. Suns and crescents are displayed in random. Some of them are bright whereas others are dim. In the same way, red and blue stripes are hanging out back and forth in the square. The stripes, suns and crescents are discordant to themselves: They do not maintain any harmony.

In this way, the painting makes experimentation over Nepali flag. It is symbolic to the state of uncertainty of the nation.

(Fig.No.9) The acrylic painting entitled 'Landscape' by Karna Pd. Maskey brings out a misty vision of a landscape with an attached sensibility.

The free flowing of the color connotes to the emotional flowing of the painter. In the painting, with soft and light color value, the artist applies color with wet technique. This painting lacks a detailed finishing like any real landscape. The artist is physically detached with the painting: but at the same time more attached to it psychologically. This fact gets explored when he chooses mild colors with delicate application. Therefore, the painting is the product of his memory, rather than the direct observation of the place.

His emotional fluidity of color is so vivid that it disturbs the perspective of the painting. As the whole land and sky is overcast with the colorful mist, it is very hard for

the viewer if the painting is in aerial or linear perspective. Had there not been houses and lines of the pillar, it would have been impossible to discover the horizon of the landscape.

The Skelton- looking two couples of trees easily gives the sense of winter season. Conventionally, blue pigment is applied to denote the dryness of the season; but the artist applies light red, yellow and light blue- all three primary colors to catch the strong visual impression of the landscape. The houses are constructed with direct application of high color tone so that there is no need of lines to create shapes, form and dimension.

(Fig.No.10) K.K. Karmacharya's acrylic painting 'Motion' shows an abstract form with an invented texture. The painting does not reproduce any real object. Still the cloud like mild wild texture gives the idea of cloud and the open sky. Such vision further leads to the impression of a majestic sight with enormous movement.

Despite the fact that the painting lacks horizon and perspective to suggest a fixed landscape, the two enormously large circular zips stretching from one end to another of the canvas suggest a motion that has begun from the earth to the sky. The title of the painting further suggests this concept of motion.

The painting further depicts the tension between motion and stationary. A serene moment pervades below and side of the painting. The soft blue pigment with smooth application of texture suggests a static position. But the semicircular zip with irregular linings and shape suggesting a speedy motion and unrest condition of white cloud deeply suggest the tension between the static and dynamic.

The painting does not refer to fixed time and space. Nor is it concerned with the doer or agent. Similarly, it is not concerned with any fixed cause and effect. Nevertheless,

it provokes a tension between motion and motionlessness with kinesthetic sensation to its viewers.

(Fig. No. 11) The acrylic painting entitled *Nepali Women with Bird* by Shanta Kumar Rai depicts three women with classically sculptural simplicity with a bird.

From the viewpoint of the balance, the sitting of the women maintains a perfect balance. The artist makes an idealistic treatment to the backdrop. He simply plays with the delicate mixture of soft blue, green, red and white color, which somehow creates dimension in the painting. Further, the backdrop is slightly divided into three. Each line has slightly separated the women into three from their centre. The lining in the backdrop has impact in the figural position of the women.

Despite the fact that the painting is in portrait fashion, the facial appearance of the painting is unclear. It sounds as if their pictures were taken far apart. Most significant feature of the painting is that there is almost similar treatment of color in both the positive and the negative space i.e. in the women and outside themselves. Similarly, type of mixture outside the figure affects the interior part too. So they are submerged into the blue looking atmosphere. If one connotes the blue color to sadness, the painting exposes a painful situation of the women.

However, the women figures cover the dominant part of the canvas; her facial disposition is opaque to the viewers. The brooding and inward cooking quality of the women is further intensified by the dark color surrounding her eyes and mouth. The artist plays with the soft and analogous colors to frame the shape and contours are not hard edged. Therefore, the viewers do not find a sharp difference between the woman and the backdrop behind her.

The women depicted with the generalized and harmonious play of color gets enigmatic turn with a small flying bird sitting on their right knee. It is unknown to the viewer if the women have closed their eyes or they are looking at the bird. The women are brooding over whereas the bird is looking out. The bird is looking for existence of the desires and imagination of the woman.

(Fig. No. 12) The painting entitled “Nature and Life” by Gautam Manandhar depicts the spiral movement of the nature and the struggle of the living creatures with special application of colors and techniques.

The concept of nature is projected through tightly waived spiral circles having numerous circular lines with soft red and black color similar to reddish skin of animals. The flesh like circular rhythm creates tension with the slanting green lines stretching from the top of the right angle to the bottom of the left angle of the painting. In between those circular and slanting waves, there lie different animals. The animals are facing towards different directions. The tightly wrought texture, rhythms of the linings, and their forceful movement impliedly suggests the concept of struggle for existence.

(Fig No.13) The painting entitled ‘Culture’ by Kiran Manandhar brings three impersonal woman characters into canvas. Compositionality, the artist does not seem to be accurate in giving focus on the right placement. The head of the woman in the centre is cut- up from her forehead: Still it is immediately balanced with the placement of two women at the side of all most equal height.

The application of brush strokes, movement of line and formation of shape gives the clue of energetic product of the artist- physically and psychological. After the hasty sketch, the artist flatly applies the color. The flat movements of the lines with unparallel

width suggest quick rhythm in the painting. The flat dabs on the canvas are the reason of the artist bringing out the form all most in the first application of pigments over the canvas.

The artist seems to be evocative of the title of the painting. Therefore, in the backdrops he fulfills the sensual intensity without specifying a proper place or time. There is domination of red, yellow and blue: The first two pigments suggesting the area above the eye line (sky) and the latter one that of the land. The red pigment at the left top, yellow at the right top and green at the left bottom to the right end of the canvas triangularly balance each other.

Between the three triangular compositions of the three pigments, there lie the three impersonalized women characters with the domination of grey and dark colors. The three women are shown with distortion of facial form but with perfect hard-edged contours and shapes due to the perfect mastery in the application of pigments as the backdrop of the painting

The action of making the backdrop and the women figures simultaneously has a great effect on the canvas. However, the viewers can have a slight impression of dimensionality in the figures; there is no distance between the figures and the backdrop. The women figures are much immersed within the space. For the viewers, the distance between the backdrop and the three women is equal.

The artist is economic on color application on the facial part of the women. There is thin application of light gray color. The contours of their faces are identified in a blurred way, with the lines of the sketches suggesting charcoal lines. On the other, there is thick application of gray and black color to show the garment of the women. The quick

spreading of the red colors overlaps one woman to another. The pigments make clear optical effect with their thickness in the borderlines. The vertical spreading of garment to create a rhythm whereas the inward looking opaque faces of the women is heterogeneous in their direction.

The facial posture and direction of them suggest the docility and vulnerability of women. The application and presence of colors physically adds intensity on it. The foregrounding of color in the garment in relation to their faces impliedly suggests that they are more dominated by their cultures than their individual identity. The application of the same soft gray color to all the women visually suggests their vulnerability. They are submerged within their cultures.

(Fig. No.14) The oil medium painting entitled 'Feeling' by Shyam Lal Shrestha has a complex blending of colors and lines. No part of the canvas is less important for the artist: there is equal treatment of colors and lines in the painting. The painting has a rich fabrication of colorful rhythmic lines in such a way that it does not let its viewers to peep into the canvas to notice the backdrop of it. The artist has made a proportional application of the oil pigments: red, blue, yellow, green, white and their complex mixtures in the ending areas of any two or three colors. Such smooth handling has reduced the optical juxtaposition of the pigments to its viewers. Similarly, the equal treatment of colors has maintained a compositional balance: the viewers' eyes are not attracted to a certain side only, but all the part of the painting gets an equal vision and importance from them.

The colorful lines that vertically extend one after another perpetually lead the attention and movement of perception process of its viewers the way the lines are extended. Still the different application of colors create a sort of depth in some parts of

the painting. The parts receiving the dark blue colors give the sense of depth compared to that of the white and yellow colors.

The multiplicity of colors, their coexistence in juxtaposition, the rhythmic energy of the colorful lines keep a special meaning to the title of the painting: Feeling. The way feelings are multiple in nature. They have their own way of coming-in and going-out from our mind. Sometimes two contrary opinions and thoughts juxtapose in the mind. Such autonomous mental state is physically displayed with the artistic application of colors, lines, their material existence and their rhythmic movements in the canvas.

(Fig. No.15) The acrylic painting entitled '*Arupan Gaami* Composition' (Abstract painting) by Ramesh Khanal depicts such a painterly world, which does make coherence neither to any organic nor to any objects possessing angular shapes. As the titles claims "*arupan gaami*" literally meaning having no definite forms, the image searching viewers find nothing more than the application of colors in identified shapes and figures.

Despite the fact that the painting lacks any objective shape and figures, it has maintained a compositional balance. The central part receives the application of colors in patches with the domination of black colors. Conventionally the black colors are used to suggest the contours, depth or dimension, but the black patch accompanied with red and white colors foreground as unconventional shapes in the painting. Surrounding the black and white patches, the canvas is dominated with the free flow of thinned green and sky blue colors. The thinning of the pigment has made it more active in the canvas so that the colors have flown freely and have made the contested zones of the two colors with a different appearance. Further, the application of the thinned colors over the already

prepared black and white patches has enriched their existence. The use of the red pigment in three palaces in vertically linear fashion has helped to balance the optical vision of the canvas, and indirectly maintain color harmony, as well.

The painting lacks any physical resemblance so that its viewers can enjoy its optical beauty beyond the material tyranny of the objects having a definite shape. The painting possesses the quality of newness in the sense that each time the viewers can see it with different perspective and come up with a different and distinct perceptive vision and shapes.

(Fig. No.16) The oil painting entitled “*Chetan Swarup*” by Puran Khadka plays with color and shapes. The canvas is dominated by the interplaying of the shapes that are neither organic nor geometrical.

The canvas is dominated by the proportional and rhythmic balance of the zigzag, and unfamiliar shapes of four colors: red, dark brown, soft brown and gray white. Those four colors maintain the color harmony. Such unfamiliar lines make their presence in all parts of the canvas. No part is left with less value. Comparatively the strange looking gray white shapes dominate the canvas. Still soft brown shapes which balances and brings unity in other shapes as they pervade as internal part of other forms. The composition and use of colors and shape do not correspond to the meaning or sense with definite reason. Therefore, its significance lies in the sense when the viewers prolong their perception engaging themselves with the lines, shapes and cones of the painting.

(Fig. No.17) Shanker Nath Rimal’s painting ‘Untitled’ seems to be the product of spontaneous creative energy. Thick application of blue color followed by similar strong stroke of white color imposes a gravitational effect to the eyes of the viewers to the

centre. However, there is thick application of color, the smooth blend of white and blue color just above the dark blue grants a pleasant view to look at. It unusual image gives a running impression of coming towards the viewers. Then slowly the viewers' eyes run outward. The out running flow of dabbed lines further lead the viewers to the sides of the canvas where the artist has smeared with the symmetrically mix of blue yellow and red colors.

The smooth upward running rhythmic texture contrasts to the rough and juncture texture at the bottom of the canvas. The artist roughly applies dark and soft hues up to the dark blue dabs at the centre. The rough textures at the bottom of it creates special dimension up to the centre. This is how using very unfamiliar technique the artist is trying to project out some intangible through unfamiliar shapes and combination of colors.

(Fig. No. 18) The untitled painting by Jeevan Rajopadhyia explores his intangible feelings with opaque shapes, lines and smooth application of colors.

The painting gets an equal application of colors throughout the canvas. Thinned acrylic pigments are equally smeared over the canvas to create a smooth texture. The canvas has the domination of black in its border areas. The centre of the canvas contains an oval object maintaining a radical balance of the painting. The careful application of pigments with low tonal value and letting the colors go to one another zones made by the colors make the border areas very blurring. Therefore, the viewer's eyes can easily go from one color to another without the sense of contrast.

There is no application of bright pigment in any of the spaces of canvas .Soft dark color with smooth blend of red, yellow and white overall gives an impression of an old

object or cemented wall. The smooth white zigzag lines irregularly transecting from one end to another further gives the impression of old cliff or cement wall that has started breaking. Compositionally, the painting gives the impression of both, smoothness and cracking. Deep tonal value of black in the border region of the canvas contrasts to the red blood like pigments at three spaces adjacent to the black colors. Despite having such soft contrast of smoothness and cracking, old and fresh, the dim oval shape of the centre maintains a balance of the entire paintings.

(Fig. No.19) The painting entitled “Fusion of Times” by Arjun Kumar Rai maintains a symmetrical balance with the equal disposition of two circular items. Such two circular bodies usually may suggest two societies. Despite having similarity in the shape and mass, they contrast in the application of color. The circle in the right side is ash gray where as the right one is light green. The choice of color suggests the temporal phenomena. The light green is evocative of fresh and the ash-gray color to that of the old time. Those colors suggest in that way because when time passes a green and fresh thing gradually converts into grayish. This color imagery is applied to connote the two modes of time. The symmetrical balance of those two modes of time further suggests giving equal attention to both of them. The diffused lighting effect further makes equal treatment to both of them.

The artist has further foregrounded the two spheres with an opaque backdrop of black color suggesting darkness. It could be an indirect appeal for the perception the foregrounded two objects. The line of men and women folk surrounds both of the objects. Though the surrounding gives an impression of very similarities between these objects, we can find vast differences between the two objects.

The object in the right contains a symbiotic world. It possesses two lines of linear forms suggesting the flying of the birds. Such flying of the birds in both sides maintains in line makes a rhythm of the flying of the birds- suggesting an atmosphere of peace. Just above the birds, there are two peacocks with their feathers in circular fashion. Nearby the birds, peasants are busy in their agrarian activities. The birds flying in rhythmic pattern, the peacock in dancing movement and, the peasants working in the field- all in motion-presents a visual world of symbiosis. On the other, the interior part of the next mass is dominated by human figures in the state of dynamic motion. Compositionally, the human figures are in irregular rhythm with their bodies tilting towards different directions. Despite having variety in the internal pattern of the two circular masses, their surrounding maintains a unity. The legs of the people in lining and a rhythmical movement in both of the masses maintain a balance. The mass in movement and carrying musical instrument visually suggest that they are involved in their communal cultural practices that have made a fusion of the two distinct modes of time.

This is how, with the application of distinct formal properties, color pigments, lines, shapes, motion and rhythm and their internal relationship a special meaning of fusion of two modes of time has been visually created.

(Fig. No.20) The acrylic painting entitled Lost Entity (92x137cm) is by the artist Binod Pradhan. One can perceive a big hand holding a round objects suggesting the earth. Here, the artist applies the wet on wet flowing technique to depict the things. Though only half of the round object is shown, the perceivers can easily notice that it is the earth because the color application does not lead the object far to the perception of the viewers. The roundness of the earth and holding of the hand is foregrounded by applying

contrasting colors: sharp blue at the corners of the earth, and a flow of yellow color surrounding the earth. The artist carefully controls the flowing of blue color over the hand so that it maintains three dimensionality. Similarly, application of thicker colors at the sides of the earth suggests a depth and, avoids flatness.

In the internal part of the earth, the artist lets the free flowing of two colors blue and green. Those two colors are the suggestive agent of two contrasting, still complimentary parts the earth if the color of the hand refers to the human beings. The green colors, then, represents the natural world.

In the earth of the painting, there is a constant flow of the blue and green pigments. In some places, the two colors flow simultaneously, in some they contest; and in other places their automatic mixture results to the formation of different colors. Such play of the blue and green colors metonymically suggests the years long relationship between the human beings and the natural world.

The idea of the free flow of congenial relationship of the two colors gets a different turning when our eyes get entangled to the objects suggesting of the skeleton. Though they cover a small space, the skeletons are depicted inside red and yellow circles contrasting the blue and green colors. Such contrast of colors impliedly suggests the contrast of time and space. The skeletons are deep down the earth whereas the human beings and the natural things suggested by the blue and green colors respectively are on the surface level of the earth; this in turn, suggests the latter are the extinct out of the earth. There is contrast between the world of living and the dead in term of application of colors. The skeletons represent the world of the dead. The later is in the interior part of the earth, whereas holding hand represents the world of living.

The holding hand creates an ambiguity because it produces two meanings: first, hand that can lift the entire object (earth), can control and manipulate the things for own sake. Secondly, a hand that can uplift it means can take care and preserve it. This is how the painting lays its viewers and ambiguous conclusion that the holding of the hand refers both controlling and manipulating the earth; and preserving the earth. The foregrounding of a human hand to uplift the earth suggests that the future is in the hand of the people either to control and use it or to preserve it.

(Fig No.21) The painting entitled “Nostalgia” is by Chanda Shrestha compositionally depicts a semi abstract view suggesting a blurring vision of human figures. On the centre of the picture, there is flat application of white color, poorly suggesting two personages holding each other but totally in disfigured form. It seems to its viewers that the artist has made an emotional application of the colors. The flat application of white pigment totally ignoring the shape and contours of human body suggests that little attention is paid on forming the figure. The rectangular white line in the left does not have even the identification of limbs, whereas the line in the right has hands like projection stretching out.

The figure is in pure white and its adjacent backdrop is in pure black and blue pigments. Such nearly simultaneously contrast application of colors brings the physical holding of the two personages more close and vivid. The artist smears the red color over the head of the two. Though the two personages depicted in white color are separate, there is equal treatment of red color, which is smeared over the two personages. The red color stands for ‘warmth’, which gives the impression of closeness of the two to the perceivers. Just above the two characters, there lies a semi-circular object, which is

balanced by the application of blue dabs at the bottom of the painting. The physical balancing of the white color over the characters by the blue color at the bottom of themselves directly corresponds to the literal meaning of nostalgia; it is the feeling of sadness mixed with pleasure when one thinks of a period or event earlier in one life.

The painting visually suggests the theme of nostalgia with the semi abstract vision of forms and proper choice of pigments with adjusting application.

(Fig. No.22) The acrylic painting entitled “Me and My Shadow” (192*122cm) by Prithivi Shrestha, depicts a personage and his reflection occupying almost the entire canvas. The scale of painting the man represented within it makes a powerful impression when seen in person.

The design is based on symmetrical balance: the real person and its shadow (reflection) maintain the equal space in the painting. The two white vertical lines in the center divide the composition into almost two equal halves. The fundamental symmetry draws our attention to the ways in which the two sides are not alike, for it sets them in opposition. The real personage is in blue-cool, its reflection is even cooler, and nevertheless the hollow shadow evokes a mysterious shadowy reality of uncertainty.

A composition divided so clearly into two could easily break apart, and the artist uses several means to tie the two halves together. Overall, the unity of the painting rests on over spreading lines coming out of the body of both the real personage and its shadow.

The title of the painting contrasts to the picture in the canvas. The title says me and my shadow, and a shadow is usually at the back; and it is on the floor or wall. But in figure the shadow is faced opposite to him starkly facing opposite to him. Surprisingly

the reflection of shadow is not on the wall standing just like another personage like himself. The artist applies equal treatment to both the figure and the shadow.

The white zigzag lines stem out of the both figure and its shadow; which further leads to the optical illusion to the viewers in the sense that both of the figures are attached on the back drop. Further, the backdrop is unreal to the sense that it is neither linear, not aerial. Simply it is a flat surface. The flat contains other small figures of men, flower and religious symbol of Hinduism. It leads to the question whose reflection the small figures are. In this vain, the small curve lines that extend out of the large figure and its shadow have connection to the small figures on the backdrop. Therefore, the idea of the real personage as the source and its shadow as replica blurs here. It is because both the real personage and its reflection are treated equally in term of scale and proportion. The facial direction optically deceives the idea of shadow, which never faces opposite to the real object. The shadow has the mirror effect. In mirror, we always find ourselves in opposite direction. Similarly, the same lines are connecting the real personage and its shadow, flower; *trishul* brings a tension between a real person and conceptual things, made by him in the course of living. Carrying such multiple personalities, the personage moves ahead.

(Fig. No.23) The acrylic painting entitled “*Shristi Nari*” by Dhan Bahaur Yakha, explores a world in semi-abstract fashion. The painting has a symmetrical balance with a couple of woman. The painting depicts not the fore part but the back part. The diagonal part horizontally stretching from the one end to another in the central part of the canvas suggests the female garment of the woman from the back.

The lines suggesting the shawl of the woman rhyme with the long hair. Such lines are thin in some places suggesting the slim and semi – transparent shawl; and somewhere thick suggesting both the dimension of body or flowing long and black hair.

The dynamic position of the women breaks the conventional idea to the sense that the figures are faced not the frontal part, but the back part of the women. It means they are running towards the destination which is inside the painting itself. The artist has applied smooth brush strokes of red color in two places. In the figures, they are just below the neck of the women. Their heads are shown with dark black color. A wide stroke of thin white color is applied on the head of the first woman that acts as both implied line and circular dimension of head, as well.

The arrangement of the moving in a line into the canvas creates rhythm in their movement. This rhythm further extends when viewers stand in front of the canvas to the perceive it. The viewer also stands in the same line and participates in the movement of the women in the canvas.

The conceptual backdrop is created with the harmonious mix of green, yellow and blue. There is no color contrast. The mild color simply leads the optical attention of its viewers towards the destination. This is how the attention of its viewers simply goes from near to the deep into the interplaying of the mild colors where they can see small innumerable point. The points correspond to the shape of the head. From the point of view of disposition of women, the picture conveys two sets of meanings. The women are facing towards the back, the viewers cannot see their faces only the back part of them. Projection of fact is generally related to the identity, so it may refer that the women in the canvas are running in search of knowledge as identity. On the other hand, it may simply

mean the creative journey of the woman (source of creation) that involves anyone who perceives it.

(Fig. No. 24) The acrylic painting entitled “*Salik*” by Anil Shahi synthesizes the technique of photography and poster to its viewers. The backdrop sounds as if it were a black and white photography whereas the distinct projection of *salik*, i.e. statue in rectangular dome with different color from the larger backdrop looks like a poster color. Such special highlighting distinguishes the *salik* from the everyday mundane society.

The small backdrop refers to the one that of the *salik* and the large backdrop to the one which is behind the *salik*. The latter is projected so smoothly to give the verisimilitude of the photographic landscape. The artist is trying to be as accurate as possible. It sounds the people are unaware with the photographer. The vehicles are running. People are walking. They do not have any compositional relationship.

Unlike the large backdrop, the one behind the *salik* makes specific use of distinct colors ranging from pure lemon yellow to dark blue. The 150 cm long canvas is equally divided into 5 halves, 30 cm breadth of each half. As the canvas is vertically divided into 5 equal halves, it gives a general impression to its viewers with clearly visible straight black line that there are five *saliks*-one in each separation. The still art-photographic details of the large backdrop and the poster like representation of *saliks* – creates a visual tension to its viewers when they count six *saliks* in five blocks of the canvas. Two *saliks* are at the two ends of the large canvas; and four *saliks* are placed between each joining of the canvas. The visual tension is further heightened when the viewers find the radical balancing of the *saliks*. No *saliks* is presented at the centre. They are placed between two

blocks. Further, the saliks are not in the same line. They are placed up and down sounding like irregular rhythm.

The atmosphere of the painting is insignificantly dim in the right side compared to that of the left. The visual objects are dim there. But the atmosphere of each of the salik contrasts to that of the large one. The backdrop of each salik suggests special application of colors.

The large backdrop is designed on linear perspective, whereas, in the salik the depth of atmosphere is blurred by the flat application of colors. There is domination of yellow soft green hues in the backdrop of the saliks. There is application of soft green color for the land of each Salik; and domination of yellow color to donate the sky of each of them from the left. The first picture of salik has the full application of yellow color to donate sky. The second one has soft blue and yellow, third lemon yellow and yellow, fourth, blue and yellow, fifth sky blue and yellow, and the last dark blue and yellow. This is how there is specific application of distinct colors in each salik.

The backdrop gives us information of time and space. By the flat application of colors, the artist has removed the sense of place, still the colors speak about the special times. The gradual time of the large photographic backdrop contrasts to the highlighted times in each of the blocks in the saliks.

The specific highlighted time projected in relation to salik (statue of the martyr) gives a specific meaning when they are in the transitional point between two blocks of the painting. Therefore, the saliks are not only different from the rest banal atmosphere but they are also the transitional points joining the blocks of time.

(Fig. No. 25) The acrylic painting entitled “Beauty of Creation” by Arina Tamrakar has a unique blend of lines, shapes and colors, displaying the unity and rhythm of the natural world. It does not correspond to any real landscape. It does not deal with portrait and human activities and feelings. Nevertheless, the artist deals with the creation of plants, human faces, and graffiti like objects.

In the painting, there is flat application of dark blue color as the background of the painting with calligraphical linings and curves. On the face of it, the artist makes use of green, yellow and ash –like white color. The artist plays feely, without burden of creating a replica of the natural objects. There is equal formation of organic and rectangular shapes. There is domination of human faces in the painting. Human heads in different posture and direction have been depicted there. Such human heads do not really correspond to the real ones because the artists here defamiliarized them into unreal ones. Such faces are not demonic but strange having enormously long nose, unreal projection of eyes, small or large mouth. All most all contours and shapes correspond to the human faces. It looks as if the painting is a beautiful garden of green vegetables containing shrubs, grass and climbers but they have produced green fruits and vegetables in the form of human faces. Further, there are three layers of gray rectangular shapes that are imprinted with human figure in random in them.

In this way, there is interplaying of colors, lines and forms in the painting. Though the painting is related to the natural objects and human figures, they have nothing to do with the human condition or environmental phenomena. Simply it gets its viewers entangled with its unfamiliar shape, forms and play of colors.

(Fig. No. 26) The acrylic painting 'The Artist' by Rabin Kumar Koira conceptualizes an artistic world into three primary colors; red, blue and yellow. The painting deals with the condition of human being (an artist in the painting) but in the conceptual level. Therefore, the artist does not necessarily reproduce a replica of a real nature with certain perspective, depth and three dimensionality. The flat application of three colors with perfect linings and measurement eliminates the projection of a particular time and space. Further, the painting refutes any perspective, linear or areal.

The perfect linings, controlled and smooth application of color strongly suggests the artwork as premeditation of the artist, so he is trying to deliver a fixed state or condition to the perceivers. The painting displays with primary colors. Despite the fact that the artist has applied the primary color in a singular way- one color at a time. But he has colored with another color with dry on dry technique. So the simple smooth and perfect linings composition provides optical effect with effects of another colors.

The painting has the domination of yellow color. In the blue part, first the artist applies the yellow color, and then smears over thin blue color. The thinning application of color over another color by dry on dry technique provides a strange optical effect to the viewers.

The application of red and blue color has distinct color effects. The smearing of blue over yellow does not totally eliminate color effect of yellow underneath. There is a dull presentation of yellow over there. The red color dominates yellow, but it does not to the blue color. The sun-like circular object has, thus two optical effects to the viewers it has a mixed effect on the blue color whereas it is pure red in the yellow zone.

The existence of human figure, sun-like round object, and yellow color suggesting light gives an impression of a man (The artist) in a certain state or condition. Superficially, the painting seems to be simple, plain with straight lines, and smearing of primary colors. But those lines and colors have a complex relationship. On the right end of canvas, there lies a vertical rectangular shape yellow color with hard-edged lines. Similarly, there is a shape with multiple joining of lines having eleven cones, inside it there lies a personage (an artist) in a lead position. In front of the personage, there lie sun-like round object adjacently above and a painting-like rectangular object in front of him. Both the sun and painting are perfect and but the space taken by the personage is complex. The multiple curving of the hard-edged lines easily connotes the idea of complexity to the viewers. The personage is ambiguously looking at the sun and the canvas.

The composition, the three shapes: sun, canvas and the artist gives a specific meaning to the viewers. Both the artist and the sun are in red color. If the red sun is the source of the light, generation or creation, in the same way the artist in red color is the creator of the canvas. In this way, the painting conveys the world of the artist with the strange application lines, shapes and colors.

(Fig. No. 27) The acrylic painting entitled 'Hamro Parichaya' (Our Identity) by Suman Kumar Shrestha depicts a cityscape with specific application of primary lines and colors.

The artists divide the 93x154 cm vertically rectangular canvas into three by thinning yellow and blue colors. The three blocks are colored with the three primary colors: yellow, red and blue from the right of the canvas. All the three blocks of the canvas are filled with a complex composition of buildings and constructions of a city,

giving a blurred vision of a cityscape. The ambiguity of colors and lines as separating and joining agents pervades throughout the painting.

The application of smooth paint with three primary pigments yellow, red and green separates it into three. The small straight yellow and blue zips further separate them.

The painting entails the ambiguous application of primary colors: the colors that separate the canvas into three rectangular blocks, the same colors bind them. Irregular rhythm of the feather shaped white pigment pervades over all throughout, irrespective of color boxes. In the yellow zone, soft red pigment is applied to create dimension, lines and perspective. Similarly, the blue pigment is applied in the red rectangular box to create the forms and the shapes of the buildings and construction. The blue box is darker than the red and yellow pigments. Still the special application white forms opaque buildings over there.

Further, the small rectangular stripes that are used to separate the boxes have cohesive effect too. Blue color divides the red and yellow. It could also mean that the blue unites them. In the same way, yellow color divides blue and red. It could mean that the yellow unites blue and red. In color theory, yellow, red and blue are analogous that is, the colors adjacent to one another. The author has created the ambiguous color effect with the implication that color can both join and separate by bring one step further color in between two analogous colors.

Moreover, the painting fosters the sense of unity. However, the color application produces the optical illusion of separation and unity. In the deep down, there is no separation: The lines, shapes and the forms of the painting do not separate. The houses

and construction work formed in a color zones are extended to another color zone. The criss-crossing of the lines and shapes denotes the separation is illusionary.

The idea of unity and separation is linked to the title our identity by the artist. The composition and use of colors, suggests the unity as identity of the city shape.

(Fig. No. 28) The acrylic painting entitled 'Untitled' by Navindra Man Rajbhandari, plays with colors and shapes. The rectangular canvas contains a number of geometrical shapes; square, rectangles, circular etc. It contains four zip lines from one end to another, four rectangles, two squares and innumerable circles on the blocks.

Though the blocks are formed hard-edged lines, it is very hard for the viewers to fix eyes in a certain place. First, the painting violates the norm of optical centre, which is usually on the one-third of the painting. The smaller square is on the two third from the top. The horizontal and vertical zips further imbalance the composition. The vertical line slightly runs from the left side of the painting. In addition, the horizontal line runs from the two third of the painting. This misbalance is improved with the placement of the square blocks. Both of the blocks are not exactly centre of the zips; but they are on the geometrical central of the painting. Such placement of the square blocks gives the sense of balance in the painting.

The interplaying of the geometrical shapes making three layers one after another. The first one is the layer of four rectangles and a reddish zip running horizontally. There is application of mild red and soft blue color with variation in intensity of pigments. The second and the third square blocks are with blue and the black pigments, respectively. The first rectangular blocks are deeply inscribed with circular rhythm, which provokes

tactile and kinesthetic appeal to our senses. This is how the still plate blocks produce moving effect in the painting.

(Fig. No.29) The painting entitled 'Support' in mixed medium by Santa Magar is primarily concerned with the technical aspects of painting rather than any external subject matter. The artist has explored his artisanship in the tension and balancing of the mass.

The painting is monochromatic tint and shade of black color. Eight square blocks are technically placed in a pile. The blocks are chaotically faced to different directions but they are arranged in a pile because of the technical balance of blocks from one to another.

The placement of the blocks gives a sensation to the viewers that the upper layers may fall down. Nevertheless, slowly the composition and balance of the painting convinces the audiences the piles up does not break. The symmetrical balance of the painting, into turn, makes balance in the pile of the blocks, too.

The flat backdrop of the painting also maintains a balance. The first circular layers of the painting contrast. The right end of the painting is in high dark whereas the left one is in dark black. But this contrast is immediately balanced by their adjacent backgrounds. There is inter-change of the colors. The right side is coupled with the layer of the dark black, whereas the left side is coupled with the light dark. Therefore, if we divide the canvas vertically into two, the thin light dark and thick dark black of the right are balanced by thin dark black and thick light dark.

The painting further displays the technical application of the same pigment with different range of the values from high dark to low dark that plays significant role to produce dimensionality and create implied lines within the same color. In the painting,

the artist does not separate lines to denote the shape. Shapes are created with the direct application of color. The careful application of the intensity creates dimension implied lines shape and form in the painting. This special quality of the painting makes the perceptive movement of the perceiver very slow and attentive with a curiosity how a balanced is maintained. The curiosity gets addressed after going through the balanced and attentive process of the painting.

(Fig. No.30) The acrylic painting entitled 'Timeline' by Jivan Poudel explores the tension between the spiral time suggested by the clocks and the dimensional time of our memory.

The artist hangs a real watch to show the ever-running nature of time. The watch powered by cell moves continuously. The very fluidity of time contrasts to the discordant four lines in white color. The plate of the science made watch is cracked. Just above it, there is a watch-like round object suggesting time imagery. The time suggested by the watch is spiral that repeats after every twenty-four hours but the time of our memory is dimensional. It is rather impenetrable.

The backdrop of the watch is black with blend of blue and red. The invented texture is multi-layered and has the cracking effect. The rough texture with fluidity of color adds dimension of it to the infinity. So the atmosphere outside the watch has also a flow of time which is infinite, irregular, and beyond comprehension. It is dark like the rough black texture.

The dimensional time suggested by the vast colors is rough and multi-directional, and the linear time that the watch shows in a circular fashion. The painting shows a

tension between them. The rough and dark texture of the canvas denotes the domination of the ever-pervading dimension of time.

(Fig. No.31) The mixed medium painting entitled 'Presentation of Inner Feelings' by Krishna Prakash Shah presents an abstract vision. If one goes through the title of the painting, the way our feelings is unexpressible within the limited conventionality of language, in the same way, the painting is unexpressed in terms of its shapes, forms and application of colors.

The significance of the painting lies in its process of composing that requires a prolonged time to go through the process of doing it. In the centre, there is presence of soft blue, but the application of dark colors in both sides of it makes the soft blue part brighter and it maintains a balance in the painting. The artist delicately applies colors so that its texture would not be coarse and crude to disturb the visual sensation of its viewers.

The soft play of color with low intensity gives the impression of a cloudy day. As if the clouds have received sunrays, so the corner of them is comparatively whiter. Such a cloudy day sky gives an illusion of being the cloud in between the sun and perceiver.

The way the clouds in the sky have no shape, in the same way cloud like objects have no definite shape. The viewers have the liberation to form the shape of the cloud like figures. The special effect of the painting is that the painting gives the impression of bright source of light is behind the unfamiliar shapes so the white color softly comes out from the fragile regions of the shapes.

(Fig. No.32) The acrylic painting entitled Virtual Reality by Pradhumna Shreetha dematerializes the human body with the presentation of dummy effect.

The painting makes a bizarre presentation of two incomplete human bodies. The presentation, technique and application of colors and forms suggest that the figures in the painting are detached from any social, cultural and human affinity. Nor is there sense of moral decorum. The picture does not appeal the sensibility of the viewers at all. The entire properties of the painting suggest artificiality and hollowness.

The painting artistically makes a radical balance. The figure in the slightly right has been balanced by the opposite figure hanging down from the top. Further, the dummy legs at the right side of the painting balance the stretching left hand of the hanging man.

Similarly, in term of the design of the figure both of them maintain a unity in their shape of the circular object in the interior part of the figures. The hanging man has green spots with the line of blue colors; on the other hand, the armless dummy girl has purple color circular spots. The armless figure is faceless, still special application provides masque effect. Similarly, the hanging body has cold and detached closed eyes. The head is tied with right hand.

The Painting portrays nudity, but it does not generate any sensibility to the viewers. Such hard and detached feeling is further fostered by blue flat application of the backdrop. The sky blue color is thickly and pompously painted to suggest artificiality of the painting.

(Fig. No.33) The painting entitled '*Tudal*' by Aary Rajbhandari explores the a unique technique to give the impression of sculpture and decoupage (art of cutting making pictorial shape by cutting papers into shapes) into her canvas so as to present the gigantic figure of the goddess.

The goddess figure having three heads is compositionally larger to the size of the canvas. Her head decorated with flowers have almost touched the top end of the canvas. All most all the technique of the painting are guided with the motif of foregrounding the figure of the goddess into magnificence.

The painting has firm and still application of colors. However multiple colors are applied, the entire figure of goddess is formed with monochromatic effect. The gray color with slight change of color values has been applied to form the three dimensionality of the figure. This suggests the longevity of the statue from ages. Further, the grandeur shape of the goddess is been highlighted placing an elephant in front of her. In term of scale, human body is much smaller than the elephant. But in the painting the body of them is almost equal despite the fact that the elephant is in front of her.

The backdrop of the painting is conceptualized by the application of flat colors reddish gray and dark black adjacently behind the goddess. The decoupage like application of bright white color produces a rhythm from one end to another of the painting. Especially, flat white paper like white color stripes surround the goddess over her head, on her arms, around her waist Such surrounding of white color brings the magnificent body of the goddess into focus.

(Fig. No.34) The acrylic painting entitled “Acceptance” by Nabendra Limbu has a special application of lines and shapes rather than the justification to its title. The painting dominantly makes use of two colors: grey blue in the backdrop and light red in the form of lines and shapes. There is flat application of the grey blue, which gives the impression of a two dimensional flat object. Just over it, there are a number of lines of various widths. Such lines are either vertical or horizontal in the canvas.

The joining of the horizontal and vertical lines makes numerous shapes. Some of the lines end in between their way. As a result of that the viewers can see a number of boxes-some squared, other rectangular, and rest in the process of being because the lines are in the process of joining there.

Overall, however the painting looks simple with the application of two colors in straight way and use of straight lines, the painting gives the impression of a haze metaphor. A haze has a number of small ways where a person finds very hard to find a proper way for the entrance of exit. In the same way, the numerous ways and lines entrap the viewers' eyes and lead through the narrow openings of the trap-like boxes to another direction. The narrow openings of the lines guide the perception of the viewers to the grey blue backdrop despite the fact that the latter is dull in compared to the light red lines and shapes.

(Fig. No.35) The acrylic painting entitled 'People's Movement' by Rajan Kumar Khadka makes a special application of colors in the canvas. The title gives its viewers the clue that the picture depicts war scenes.

The color application technique is used to adjust the artist's impression of the war. The painting shows that the artist has made a speedy application of the colors in its backdrops. The south-left and north- right of the canvas is smeared with the yellow color, whereas green dominates the central part of the painting. Similarly, dribbling technique is applied to point out the human figures in the painting.

The artist is emotional to the application of the colors in the painting. The emotional attachment to the subject matter of the painting is stimulated by the hasty application of the colors in the backdrop. The red blue and yellow colors are directly

smearred over the canvas. In the same way, a hasty dripping of the black color to mention the human figure suggest the artist is exploring his emotional sentiment through the colors and its artistic application. The blurred images in the picture suggest the two people are cruelly beating over another being dragged in the centre of the canvas. The red color is directly suggestive to blood in the mass movement.

(Fig. No. 36) In the painting entitled “*Tatva*” by Sagar Manandhar lines and shapes are released from the imperative to describe things objectively. The painting contains its own domain of its sensory-formal properties such as the physicality of the pigments, lines shapes etc. The monochromatic flavor of blue colour dominates the canvas with its hints and shapes.

The physicality of the color pigments and the existences of brush are there to create forms, lines and shapes. The painting refutes the plastic effect of creating the illusion by the application of different colours to create the dimension. Color pigment is thickened to create the dimension. The scale like rectangular shape extends from the centre of the bottom part of the canvas up to the nearly optical centre of it. The right side of it has a dimension with a vertical zip of the tint of blue colour. In the central part it, there are different unfamiliar figures crated by etching the thick pigment.

Each layering of the painting lays a distinct physical effect and texture. The viewers can easily see the first layering of the paint with the spilling effect in some where due to the gravitational pull. Then, the artist applies another thick layer of white pigment with horizontal brush strokes. Before drying it, the artist smears with blue pigments. This act of artist shows the process of drawing. The hard spines of the brush create physical lines because the blue pigment is applied before the white is dried. There are a number of

physical lines of white and blue colour running horizontally. Due to this, the blue colour looks different in its first application and over the white on. Instead of artificial depth, the painting makes a real depth of its pigments. A physical existence of circular object is seen at the left, nearly the central part of the canvas. Similarly, a stain of rectangular blue zip is there parallel to the rectangular shape in the centre. The bigger denote the height whereas the smaller one suggests the physical depth. The mud-like colours splashed over the painting create small dabs and dots.

In this way, the painting has the physical action of colors. The blue color is thickened and different forms are created suggesting the real height and depth. With the physical force of the hard spines of the paintbrush over not finely dried white and blue paints, lines are created. The shapes, lines and figures are amorphous that connote to the title of the painting “*tatva*” meaning ‘essence’ or ‘basic element’.

In this way, the contemporary Nepali artists adopt a number of experimental practices to exhibit the forms that are primarily oriented to exploration of the contents that are based on religious, spiritual and social idioms.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Innovative forms, techniques and methods dominate the contemporary Nepali paintings to explore the contents that are based on communally affirmed religious and cultural idioms. Due to the accessibility of global innovations, trends and movements in art through media, the artists are creatively aware to present their subject matter in their own method and techniques. Applications of such formal properties are not meant for eroding out content from the canvas; rather they are tools for expressing the contents in an innovative way.

An artwork gets perceptive value from its audience only when it possesses a novelty in presentation of the form. Freedom in presentation has created challenges for the artists to come up with a novel form that delivers aesthetic and artistic quality to the viewers. The repetition of the same thing – be it realistic or symbolic – degrades the artistic and aesthetic value of art. It no more renews the viewers' perception. Therefore, the artists defamiliarize the same subject matter with novelty in their presentation. They are careful on the choice of pigments, drawing of lines and shapes, creating movements and rhythm in their painting, for such formal properties are vehicles for exploring the contents.

The frequently changing artistic movements, trends and “isms” give us the reason any medium addressing rigidity changed violently by the artistic creations with novelty. In the global movement of painting, the artists refuted with the representative “plastic art”; that possessed the illusion of dimensionality of objects. It is quite relevant to discuss it in touch with the contemporary Nepali painting that is loosely categorized the time after the 1950s.

Unlike the gradual development of art in the west fostered by different trends, movements, and 'isms', the beginning of the Contemporary Nepali Painting is the result of the permissive environment after the 50s. The concept and components of modernity travelled through different trajectories. Today this is easier due to the global media of art. Shift from tradition mode of learning to academic one has further processed the intensity of the contemporary Nepali painting more vibrant and innovative. The individual methodology and technique has become contextual to possess creativity and artistic quality in painting. Due to the above context, the contemporary Nepali painting is distinct from the traditional one. Innovation and experimentation in forms has become convention to explore the contents.

Despite having the relevancy of studying the formal properties to understand the contemporary Nepali painting, one conventional misconception pervades regarding the understanding of formalistic study. For them, the study of form is rigid, cold, and mechanical that is confined with the forms. Nevertheless, it is the scientific study of forms to reach to the level of content. It helps for the proper study of the content too.

From the "close-up" study of forms of Contemporary Nepali Paintings, it comes to the conclusion of the study that the contemporary Nepali paintings are characterized by novelty in their expression. The artists defamiliarize the conventional forms by different ways. Some artists do not contemplate into retrospective, but create painting by chance or happenings. They neglect the outline and gradation of colors. Some artist gives focus on the intensity of light and shade whereas others focus on the conceptual value by eliminating the real time and space. Some artists apply dots and dabs of pigments whereas some focus on smooth gradation of colors.

The contemporary Nepali painting is characterized the adoptions of different method, techniques and formal properties of painting that have been used to explore and experiment over the communal socio-cultural idioms. It is not merely the replica of western art practices that are oriented towards establishing the sovereignty of form by eroding out the socio-cultural contents. The Nepali artists have adopted the western techniques and methods, but they have been used as tools for exploring and making experimentation over the contents.

The contemporary artists are informed with the formal properties practiced in the global modernity of painting. They have primarily applied such properties to explore traditional motifs and realistic contents. The painting of Lain Singh Bangdel deals with the cultural and spiritual motif. The painting of Shashi Shah experiments with his iconic horse that has mythic roots. Indra Pradhan projects out a number of masks of godly figures with the modern application of formal properties of painting. The rhythm and harmony of multi-colored stripes in Uttam Nepali's painting resembles the celestial bodies of the universe. Further, the Kali painting of Batsa Gopal Bhaidya metonymically represents the demon massacre by Kali.

In the same way, some artists have used the formal properties of paintings as tools to express their socio-cultural idioms. To take some examples, the paintings of Kiran Manandhar, Shanta Kumar Rai, and Dhanu Yakha highlight the importance of the female world with their own idiosyncratic method and techniques. Similarly, the paintings of Ramananda Joshi, Madan Chitrakar, Arjun Kumar Rai, Rabin Kumar Koirala, deal with certain concepts or socio-cultural contexts with their experimental flavor. Nevertheless, the paintings of some artists such as; Shyam Lal Shrestha, Puran Kadka, Sagar

Manandhar, and Krishna Prakash Shah are amorphous in form, they are guided with the spiritual motif of the artists. Similarly, the paintings of Shankar Nath Rimal, Jeevan Rajoupadhyay, K.K.Karmacharya and Ramesh Khanal are hardly representational.

Further, the artists are also informed by the inter- art techniques. Aarya Rajbhandari, say for example of decoupage in her painting to give the artistic forms. Jivan Poudel in his painting Time Line sticks the real clock to give the sense of time to its viewers.

This is how the contemporary Nepali artists have used unfamiliar form and shapes, lines and colors, tones and values to renew the experience of its viewers. Further, the innovative uses of the artistic techniques and experiences have laid a challenge to the viewers. Therefore, the viewers are supposed to enter the paintings through forms of the painting the painting. The study of form does not only grant aesthetic experiences but also leads to the content of painting.

In conclusion, this researcher hopes the formalistic discourse and study of forms of contemporary painting would be helpful to those who are curious to know about the formal properties of painting and contemporary Nepali experimental and artistic practices.

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Appendix



Fig. No. 1 Lain Singh Bangdel; The Old Man and Stupa



Fig. No. 4 Indra Pradhan; Masks



Fig. No. 2 Ramananda Joshi; War or Famine Life Goes on



Fig. No. 5 Uttam Nepali ; Untitled



Fig. No. 3 Shashi Shah; Buddha



Fig. No. 6 Batsa Gopal Baidya; Kali



Fig. No. 7 Krishna Manandhar; Nature



Fig. No. 10 KK Karmacharya; Motion



Fig. No. 8 Madan Chitrakar; Sun & moon



Fig. No. 11 Nepali Women With a Bird



Fig. No. 9 Karna Prasad Maskey; Landscape



Fig. No. 12 Gautam Manandhar; Nature and Life



Fig. No. 13 Kiran Manandhar, Culture



Fig. No. 16 Puran Khadka Chetan Swarup



Fig. No. 14 C Shyam Lal Shrestha; Feeling



Fig. No. 17 Shankar Nath Rimal; Untitled



Fig. No. 15 Ramesh Khanal; Arupan Gami Composition



Fig. No. 18 Jeevan Rajopadhyaya; Untitled



Fig. No. 19 Arjun Kumar Rai; Fusion of Times



Fig. No. 20 Binod Pradhan ; Lost Entity



Fig. No. 21 Chandra Shrestha Nostalgia



Fig. No. 22 Prithvi Shrestha Me and My Shadow



Fig. no. 23 Dhan Bdr. Yakha Shristi Nari



Fig. No. 24 Anil Shahi; Salik



Fig. No. 25 Arina Tamrakar; Beauty of Creation



Fig. No. 28 Narendra Man RajBhandari, Untitled



Fig. No. 26 Rabin Kumar Koirala; The Artist



Fig. No. 29 Shanta Magar; Support



Fig. No. 27 Suman Kumar Shrestha; Hamro Parichaya



Fig. No. 30 Jivan Paudel; Timeline



Fig. No. 31 Krishna Prakash Shah; Presentation of Inner Feelings

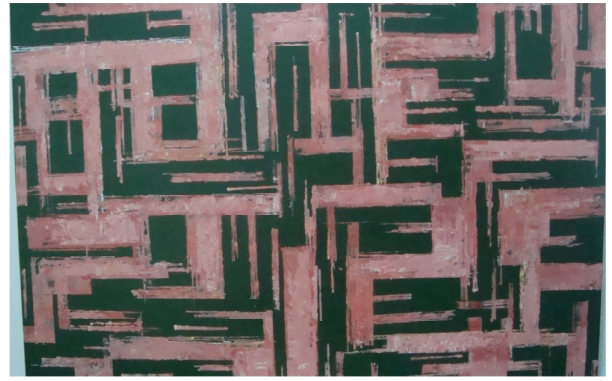


Fig. No. 34 Nabendra Limbu; Acceptance



Fig. No. 32 Pradhumna Shrestha, Virtual Reality



Fig. No. 35 Rajan Kr. Khadka People's Movement

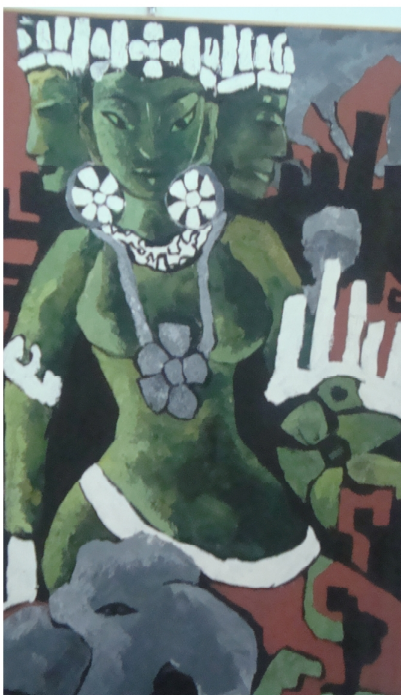


Fig. No. 33 Aarya Rajbhandary; Tudal



Fig. No. 36 Sagar Manandhar Tatva