

The background of the image is a dark blue and purple gradient, representing a night sky filled with numerous white stars of varying sizes. In the lower portion of the image, there is a silhouette of a forest of evergreen trees. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

DECEMBER'19 (12 to 18 Dec)

Artist strives to bring societal changes

The Artist provides society with emotions, colour and texture. Like Scientists make life easier ,builders put roofs over our heads, or Technicians facilitate our daily lives by enabling us to function more effectively. These things help us on a daily basis, but do not affect us emotionally. They affect our emotional well-being because they make life easier, but they do not stimulate us emotionally. Artists affect our emotions and subconscious thoughts. They elicit strong feelings by their work on canvass, clay or various other forms. Art has a wider more measurable impact on our economy, wellbeing, society and education. We need to acknowledge this impact in order to help people to see art for what it is: a natural resource. Throughout history, it has always been the case that art has the power to change society, especially when new media are used to express an idea. During the First World War, for example, movie cameras were used for the first time to record trench warfare – when the film was shown in cinemas in Britain, audiences ran out screaming. This led to the government censoring further such use of such a powerful medium. And in government censorship, and

use of art as propaganda, we see how seriously governments take the effect of art.

All of the major dictators of the C20th understood the power of art to influence the population. In Nazi Germany, Hitler set up the Ministry of Propaganda and National Enlightenment. It was headed by Goebbels, who made sure that nothing was published, performed, or exhibited without his approval.

And what Goebbels approved, of course, only fit in with Nazi ideology and ideas. In terms of art, this meant no modern and abstract art, certainly nothing hostile to the regime, and nothing that featured images other than the stereotypical blonde-haired, blue eyed set in idyllic pastoral scenes of blissful happiness. In Stalinist Russia, there was also a keen understanding of the power of art. Art portrayed contented peasants, industrious workers, and Stalin himself. In fact, Stalin was shown god-like in many paintings, a phenomenon known as the Cult of Stalin. Just as in Germany, gigantic architectural projects expressed the power of the state. However, there is no doubt that in Russia there were greater artistic achievements than in Nazi Germany. Composers worked with fewer hindrances – as seen in the works by

Prokofiev and Shostakovich, and film-makers such as Eisenstein emerged.

British always wanted to convey their superiority during the British colonization of India. They not only used local architects but also brought ideas from UK and many buildings in Gothic, Imperial, Christian and Victorian styles were erected across length and breadth of India. For freedom fighters, Songs became an important medium to express their love for country and inspired them to fight the liberation struggle. This led many writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Mukunda das, Syed abu Mohammed, etc to write songs on freedom struggle, and way to express their agony over the prevailing colonialism. Tagore's Amar sonar bangla on partition of Bengal, Bankim Chandra's Vande mataram etc are few examples.

To add on we can say that the artist's role is to communicate the truth to people across cultures and time periods. Without truth we are imprisoned by differences. But truth enables us to go beyond these differences. Universal truths do not change. They are expressed through existing institutions. The artist has the ability to go outside these institutions to ensure that

truth is upheld or to highlight the fact that the truth is not being upheld and promote change.

Here lies an important question that is so what is the role of Art in today's society? Do we really need Art to inspire us in our daily lives? What works and objects do we consider to be Art, and does Art still have a place in today's "modern", cosmopolitan World? But increasingly in some corners of global society we see that society feels that Art has become distant from everyday life, that people begin to feel that Art no longer inspires them and has nothing to do with their real, everyday lives. Are we okay with this?

We all try to make the world a better place, mitigate social gaps and search for solutions for the common good. Until now the power of art for social change has been underused; it hasn't reached a level in our society where it begins to cross between sectors, and it is still distant to the majority of the population. It's the mindset or a lack of accessibility that prevents disadvantaged people from seeing the benefits of arts and culture. But it seems only a small intermediate section is missing in order to connect the arts with the community in a systemic way. In this context it is important to mention about Art for social change (ASC), which differs from

traditional artworks. It's not a specific style, school or movement. ASC doesn't need an institutional frame, a stage, a screen, a print, any sort of materials, actors and an audience. It defines a new social order, takes a different approach to engaging the public, uses new and different methodologies, and sets a new environment with a new aesthetics.

Yet ASC shares with other art the objective of enhancing human interaction and development. It's not a product; it's a process for constructive social change. As a consequence, ASC follows a new approach of assessing social problems without aiming to solve them. This works with and for the community. It's not symbolic. It acts in a real environment to find ways to enable social and/or political change. Each project reflects certain societal issues and involves the community in which the artwork takes place. In consequence, the artist/creator/producer is deeply identified with the topic, and develops a relationship with individuals, organizations and the environment. It's impossible to create an ASC piece without deep engagement, empathy and collaboration with those who will be involved.

Ten years ago, the term 'social entrepreneur' was completely unknown. It found an extension through the

so-called social intrapreneurship, which considers those personalities who set a lever for social change within existing structures. The wheel can now be turned further to 'Artepreneurs', a term that can refer to people who pursue their social mission through artistic means and create models that are innovative, scalable and measurable.

For reference:-

- <https://www.artworkarchive.com/blog/what-is-the-artist-s-role-in-society>
- <https://www.theoryofknowledge.net/areas-of-knowledge/the-arts/what-is-the-relationship-between-art-and-society/>
- <https://artplusmarketing.com/arts-importance-to-society-should-not-be-ignored-39ea27eb8255>

Additional Readings:-

- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/unequal-unsecular/article30259807.ece>
- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/toi-editorials/love-and-money-financial-cheating-and-the-state-of-the-union/>

- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/toi-editorials/time-to-lift-curbs-four-months-on-kashmir-needs-its-prepaid-mobile-internet-and-political-leaders/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/13/the-guardian-view-on-nobel-winner-olga-tokarczuk-light-amid-the-dark>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/12/the-guardian-view-on-myanmar-and-genocide-humanity-on-trial>

Suggested Refresher Book:-

Artists: Their Lives and Works

Book by Andrew Graham Dixon (Author)