

Panel 26

Ekphrasis, Narrative Experiments and New Ways of Seeing

Artist's Novel and the Performance of the Self: Narrative Experiments in Contemporary Art

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An emerging theme like “artist’s novel”, which validates a literary genre like the novel as a medium in its own right within the discourse of visual arts, has been gaining momentum over the last two decades. With this practice of producing an artist's novel, writing, narrative, fiction and storytelling are interwoven to interrogate or reflect on an artistic object and address certain artistic concerns. The post-medium condition that came as a response to modernist formalism created the optimal conditions for the emergence of the artist’s novel. The artist’s novel, which evolved as a result of the intersection of literature and art in the same storytelling space, accounts for what Maria Fusco termed the “discursive” or “literary” or “narrative turn” in visual arts. Although there is a considerable body of work on the novels written by visual artists, an emerging genre like the artist’s novel has received only scant attention within the frameworks of literary theory and criticism. Taking into account selected artist’s novels written by contemporary female art-writers, the paper attempts to trace new experimental methods that these artists have employed in their artistic oeuvre to critically challenge history and disrupt received notions of the feminine through the performance of the self as both a political and artistic subject. The paper further examines how the artist’s novel engages with the notion of *écriture d’art féminine* that brings together the literary category of *écriture féminine* (women’s writing) and the visual arts practice of *écriture d’art* (art writing).

Biography

Aiswarya Sureshan is currently pursuing a PhD at the National Institute of Technology, Warangal. Her doctoral thesis examines one of the emerging genres within the discourse of visual arts, namely the artist’s novel. Her areas of interest include literature, art, literary theory, British fiction, and cultural studies.

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