

Panel 10

Identities and Representations

Global Palette, Regional Canvas:

Van Gogh, Subhash Chandran, and the Intermedial Life of “The Potato Eaters”

Sethuparvathy Subhash

Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee

This paper explores the intermedial relationship between Vincent van Gogh's iconic painting, *The Potato Eaters*, and a short story of the same name written by Subhash Chandran, a Malayalam writer from India. Focusing on the transformative power of interartistic influence across cultural boundaries, this study examines how van Gogh's visual narrative inspired a literary reinterpretation in an Indian minority language. This paper argues that the short story develops from an ekphrastic response to the painting, which then becomes the final scene in the story that mirrors the composition and thematic concerns of van Gogh's work. By analyzing the interconnectedness of these two art forms, the paper illuminates the rich aesthetic possibilities that arise when art transcends its original medium and cultural setting, invigorating new creative expressions and fostering a deeper understanding of shared human experiences. This analysis will consider the ways in which the Malayalam short story reinterprets themes of poverty, labor, and familial unity present in van Gogh's painting, drawing on the artistic choices of the painter. Ultimately, this study contributes to a broader understanding of intermediality and the dynamic interplay between visual and literary arts in a global context. Through a close reading of the story and a visual analysis of the painting, this paper demonstrates how such transmedial crossings—between image and text, Europe and South Asia, and canvas and narrative—result in a rich transformation that expands the reach and resonance of both works. This case study thereby contributes to broader conversations on aesthetic migration and cultural translation.

Biography

Sethuparvathy Subhash is a Research Scholar at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, Uttarakhand, India. Her research focuses on narratology in regional Indian literature, specifically Malayalam novels, and branches out to themes of literary cartography, resistance, representation, subversion, and translation studies.