
Reaching the Unreached: An Analysis of Neelpawan Baruah's Three Selected Paintings on the Influence of Human and Animals on Contemporary Art

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Abstract: *Contemporary art is alive with ideas and spirits. Human psychology, society, history, and other broad subjects are its main areas of study. People who are rich in philosophical thought are frequently contemporary artists. They ought to be taught to pay close attention to the world around them and use their artistic expression to share their opinions. We can better grasp our world and its meaning thanks to art. Empathy for art enhances our quality of life and elevates our mood, as demonstrated by scientific research. We become happier, more adept at solving problems, and more receptive to new ideas when we produce art. Animals have always been important in art, acting as symbols that evoke strong feelings and deeper meanings. They can even act as antitheses to people and our personal connections at times. Several cherished creatures can be seen frequently in our art gallery. Animal style art refers to a decorative style that originated in Ordos culture and spread to Northern Europe during the early Iron Age. It is associated with the Migration Period's barbarian art and is distinguished by its focus on animal images. There are more species than we can possibly imagine living among us on a daily basis. We can learn more about how we engage with nature, our pets, and the local wildlife by looking at animal representations in artwork. In the field of worldview, Assamese artist Neelpawan Baruah experiments with painting human and animal viewpoints on huge canvases. The present paper examines three chosen paintings by well-known Assamese visual artist Neelpawan Baruah and explores how he incorporates animal and human perspectives into his contemporary work.*

Keywords: *Human, Animal, Contemporary Art, Neelpawan Baruah, Paintings, Influence, Assam.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The human figure is frequently employed by artists to convey a message or tell a story in addition to being a means of investigating the human form and psychology. In addition to being aesthetically pleasing, art may convey information, influence daily life, and make a social statement. An effective lens for examining the human condition is provided by art. Our deepest feelings, fears, and wishes can be explored and expressed via it. In moments of beauty and transcendence, we can find comfort in art while we face hard truths about the world and ourselves.

The term "animal-made art" refers to creations created by non-human creatures that people have deemed to be artistic, such as paintings, songs, photographs, and videos. While some of these are made by humans, others are made by animals in their natural state, frequently as courtship displays. As one of the first Scythian groups to appear at the start of the first millennium BCE, the Iron Age Saka population of the eastern Eurasian Steppe is said to have produced some of the earliest examples of "animal style" art. It is impossible to overestimate their benefits to agriculture, transportation, companionship, treatment, conservation, education, and a variety of enterprises. For the sake of both the current and future generations, we must acknowledge and appreciate the roles they play and take steps to protect and preserve them.

Neelpavan Barua's unique paintings demonstrate his sophisticated sense of style. His paintings have an extremely natural, deeply caring, and sympathetic aspect that appears every time he makes an attempt to speak with nature. However, when he tries to portray human and animal forms on massive canvases, everything becomes rigid and lifeless. Even yet, he managed to produce some quite endearing paintings on a handful of his much smaller canvases. The paintings of Neelpavan Barua include a significant ornamental element and design based on the perspectives of humans and animals.

Statement of the Research Problem:

Contemporary artists are increasingly focused on the processes of connection between the human and animal realm, despite the fact that history records many forms and ideas inspired by animals. Since human culture has absorbed so much from non-human entities and from what we typically refer to as "nature," recent art research has challenged the lines separating nature and culture. As a result, the opposition between culture and nature, which is firmly anchored in anthropocentric and humanistic worldviews, doesn't seem to make sense anymore.

The study of artistic worldview examines both animal and human viewpoints on dynamic events and subjects. Ideological elements in the visual and fine arts are shaped by human and animal influence. Neelpawan Baruah's works on Human and Animal Perspectives in Contemporary Art of Assam are incredibly noteworthy. Neelpawan Baruah's three chosen paintings on the influence of humans and animals explore the hybrid culture between humans and animals through the use of mixed media, which is crucial to the development of Assam, India, and global contemporary art.

2. RELATED WORKS

Andersen, K. & Bochicchio, L. (December, 2012), in the paper "The presence of Animals in Contemporary Art as a Sign of Cultural Change" talk about how our language, which is rife with metaphors and idioms drawn from zoological examples, has been influenced by our encounters and interactions with nonhuman alterity. This has also had an impact on our aesthetics and technologies. Seemingly nonsensical is the conflict between civilization and nature, which is firmly ingrained in anthropocentric and humanistic worldviews.

Anthony Cross (September, 2018), in the paper titled "The Animal is Present: The Ethics of Animal use in Contemporary Art" highlights that the growing number of painters working today use live animals in their pieces. Despite the fact that animal rights activists and the art world have given this trend a lot of attention, it has not received much consideration in the philosophy of art, which is surprising considering the difficult aesthetic and ethical issues these pieces raise.

Molly H. Mullin (1999), in the paper titled " Mirrors and Windows: Sociocultural Studies of Human-Animal Relationship" explores that the greater knowledge of human connections with other humans has long been a main goal of those who are interested in the interactions that humans have with animals, a relationship that is becoming more and more contentious.

Gordon Hodson & Kristof Dhont (June, 2023), in their paper "An integrated psychology of (animalistic) dehumanization requires a focus on human-animal relations" highlights that the idea of a human is the starting point of the attribute-based method to dehumanization, which then proceeds to under- or deny that target's human characteristics.

Objective of the Study:

The main objectives of the study are-

1. To study how animals and humans are portrayed in contemporary art.
2. To explore how the contemporary art of Assam has been influenced by the paintings of Neelpawan Baruah.

Research Questions:

1. How are humans and animals depicted in contemporary art?
2. Have Neelpawan Baruah's paintings had an impact on the contemporary art of Assam?

Hypothesis:

A portrait is an artistic creation that usually concentrates on the face and depicts a person, animal, or group of people. Hold the posture or seating arrangements of subjects during a portrait painting session. Positive room features in an artwork that contrasts with the background, such as shapes, forms, or lines.

Contemporary Art is art created and produced by artists working in the present era. Contemporary artists operate within and react to a worldwide milieu characterized by cultural

diversity, rapid technology advancements, and complexity. The need to express and communicate ideas, preserve a particular moment in time, place, person, or object, and enhance the beauty of our surroundings is just a few of the many reasons why art is created. The human mind is stimulated and inspired by art. The study of human and animals has a significant influence on contemporary art. Exploring the ways in which Neelpawan Baruah's paintings have inspired contemporary art of Assam is a topic of significant interest to academics, researchers, and the general public.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both qualitative and quantitative research. The paper's foundation is comprised of primary and secondary sources. The study aims to describe how individual lives and the views of humans and animals interact with the contemporary art world as collaborators, materials, or objects.

The study of human and animals has a big impact on contemporary artwork. Examining how Contemporary art of Assam has been influenced by the paintings of Neelpawan Baruah is a subject of great interest to scholars, researchers, and the general public. The three selected paintings by Neelpawan Baruah were produced using a mixed-media technique to support the idea of blending cultures to advance societal development and transformation. The paintings also share the title "Hieroglyphs," which is underlined in each one. Actually, "hieroglyphs," which are found in ancient Egyptian and certain other writing systems, are stylized images of objects that stand in for words, syllables, or sounds.

This approach has involved challenging the humanist notion of the knowing subject, who holds a unique claim over language and reflexive consciousness in contrast to animals, as well as creating a more nuanced understanding of animal behavior and cognition. Collage, Land arts, graffiti, digital arts, mixed media, de collage, and printing are some of the artistic abilities and methods used in modern art works. The "art of today" is contemporary art; this combines a variety of dynamic mediums, techniques, ideas, and themes.

Animals are used as "models" in research to examine specific facets of a biological process. Certain animal models, such as fish, frogs, fruit flies, and roundworms, are occasionally utilized. Transportation, housing for animals, cage temperature, hygienic conditions, water supply, and food selections is all related to animals. It is crucial to learn and put into practice the fundamentals of animal handling procedures since they have a direct impact on the results of research studies using animals.

Animals are utilized in a wide range of scientific disciplines, including consumer product testing, biomedical, aviation, automotive, military, agricultural, behavioral, and cognitive research. Humans are driven by their instincts, intelligence, and logic, and they are capable of specific types of thought. Animals are only driven by their instincts because they are not capable of reasoning. Bipedalism is the state in which humans walk on two legs. Animals have four legs, or are quadrupedal.

There is a division between humans and other animals in modern society. During the mid-20th century, farm families and animals coexisted in rural society. The animal was progressively driven out of the city as urbanization increased. The urban civilization began to humanize pets with the introduction of intensive farms, whose growth took place behind our

backs. But we must also remember that theriomorphism in art is not solely the result of contingent and historical realities; as the aforementioned study by Karin Andersen eloquently demonstrates, there are profound implications pertaining to both the myth and the genesis and existence of humans on Earth.

The most modern and well-known medium for expressing the creation of contemporary art is digital arts. Modern artists create works of art by inventively combining native and recycled materials. Structure, wood, fabrics, paper, brass, glass, found objects, and computer programs are among the materials they integrate. The possibilities for artists have increased and art forms have been altered by new materials and technologies.

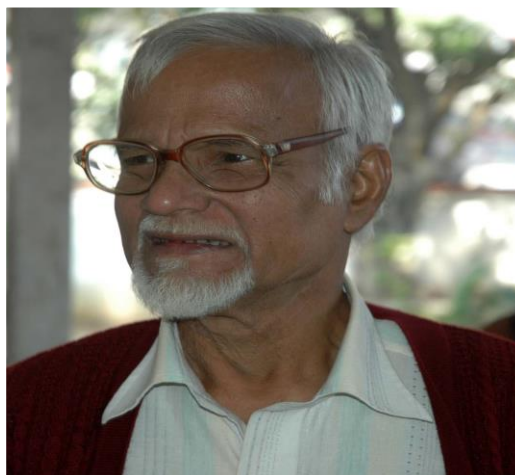
Abstract, experimental, and process-based art are common features of contemporary modern art. Additionally, new media including photography, video, and computer-generated imagery are frequently used in it. The goal of today's modern artists is frequently to question established norms and ideals, and their art can be contentious and provocative.

The research highlights the necessity of a transient methodological influence in addition, considering the distinct roles that humans and animals play in Neelpawan Baruah's artwork. Lastly, this study illuminates a mostly unnoticed aspect of contemporary art by highlighting the nuanced relationship between humans and animals.

Rationale:

The medium of contemporary art permits the artist to remark on society in addition to their own personal expression. This can involve representing their opinions on anything from pop culture to politics, either literally or symbolically. Educators may foster inquiry, conversation, and discussion about the world and the issues that impact our lives by introducing modern art into schools and communities. Visual artist Assam's Neelpawan Baruah's contributions to the artistic worldview of humans and animals are quite valuable.

The Assamese visual artist Neelpawan Baruah's Identity and Work in Relation to the Evolution of Human and Animal Viewpoints in Contemporary Art toward Artistic Worldview:



Popular Assamese visual artist Neelpawan Baruah, who passed away on October 28, 2022, was born on June 1, 1936, and is one of the most well-known painters in Assam and North-East India. He has had a big impact on the discourse about modern art in the area. After graduating from Santiniketan with a formal degree in fine arts in 1968, Neelpawan Baruah created the Assam Fine Arts & Crafts Society in 1971, taking the art world by storm with his innovative artistic style and capable organizational management. His explorations of creative worldview and highly valuable contemporary art via the lenses of humans and animals are of great significance for the new generation artists, academicians and the general public. His works, which combine animal and human characteristics, had a big influence on both international art and current Assamese painting. Things like village life, the surroundings, trees, horses, harmony between the peace, happiness, and emotional bonds are few examples of his ideas on people and animals.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Even though there has been a recent spike in interest in animal subjects in contemporary art, animals are typically recoded as beautiful objects by human culture's semiotics. The anthropocentric worldview, however, limits this fascination to symbolic things that represent the human experience or, more broadly, the natural world, with little regard for actual animals as unique, sentient, and important beings.

An existential emptiness that permeates the urbanized and internationalized western civilization may be indicated by the many depictions of animals in the arts. This thesis supports the assertions made by Bernard Fibicher regarding the significance of animal presence in visual art across historical periods: an animal's presence would be inversely correlated with our actual proximity to the natural world, but it would be proportionate to our demand for animal interactions.

Posthumanism, contemporary art, and critical animal studies provide insights into human relationships with nonhuman animals that go beyond anthropocentric views in current art education. The issue of interactions between humans and nonhuman animals by talking about the concepts of speciesism and posthumanism as forms of discrimination those are comparable to other types of oppression. Putting discrimination to the test improves our comprehension of how humans interact with nonhuman existence.¹

The post-World War II avant-garde's dual point of reference animal and technology indicates that humans must engage in a conversation with the other, which suggests that the process of accepting our non-self-sufficient human state has begun. This notion partially contradicts the humanistic tradition and is consistent with Roberto Marchesini's definition of the decline of anthropocentrism, which he has stated multiple times.²

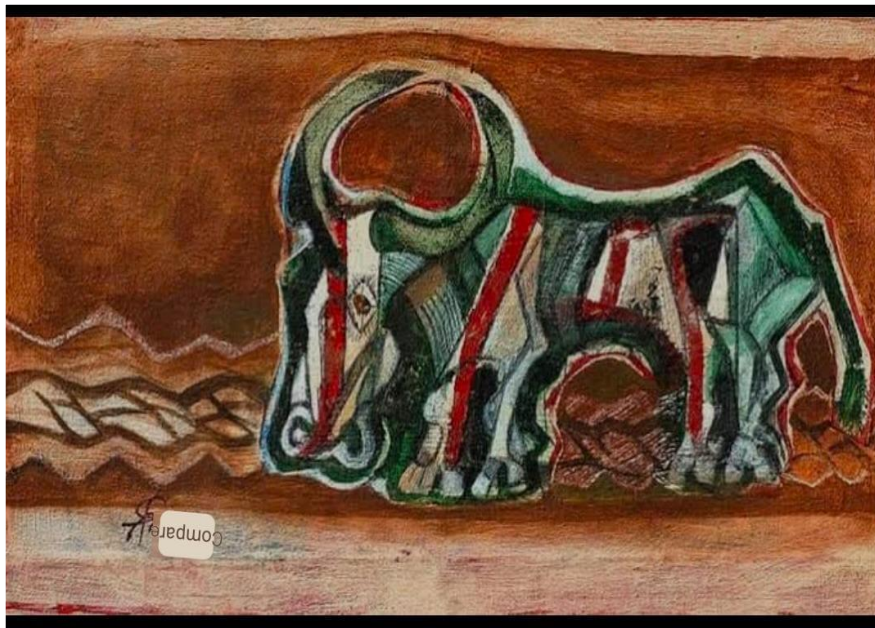
Moving on to the topic of two-dimensional and virtual media, we can see that genetic and biological promiscuity is visible in the evolving forms of human and non-human animals in a number of Daniel Lee's works. However, the symbolic and imaginative assemblage of mutant creatures in Karin Andersen's paintings, videos, and digital images reinforces the divide between reality and fantasy. Nonetheless, Lee and Andersen both discuss the idea of identity, which inevitably has to do with the cultural impact of alterity.³

A philosophical system of moral rules guiding a person or a community is known as ethics. The question of whether a particular collection of behaviors or acts is generally fair is what the phrase alludes to.⁴

The field of animal ethics encompasses the morally acceptable and unacceptable treatment of animals within the framework of human responsibility.⁵ Ethos, which translates from Latin to "ethics," is the part of the artwork that demonstrates the creator's knowledge and builds their trustworthiness.⁶ The overwhelmingly prevalent topic of anthropocentrism comes up as we examine modern art that features animals. Within the framework of the speciesism mentality, man has historically utilized animals as a medium for artistic expression.

Folktale depictions of the ontological nature of man's relationship with animals, as well as prehistoric paintings and sculptures that influenced modern art, offer evidence of this relationship. In Western culture, animals were used as entertainment in zoos and circuses before they became the basis for performance art. Animals were the original subject matter for paintings, and animal blood was most likely the first paint used.⁷

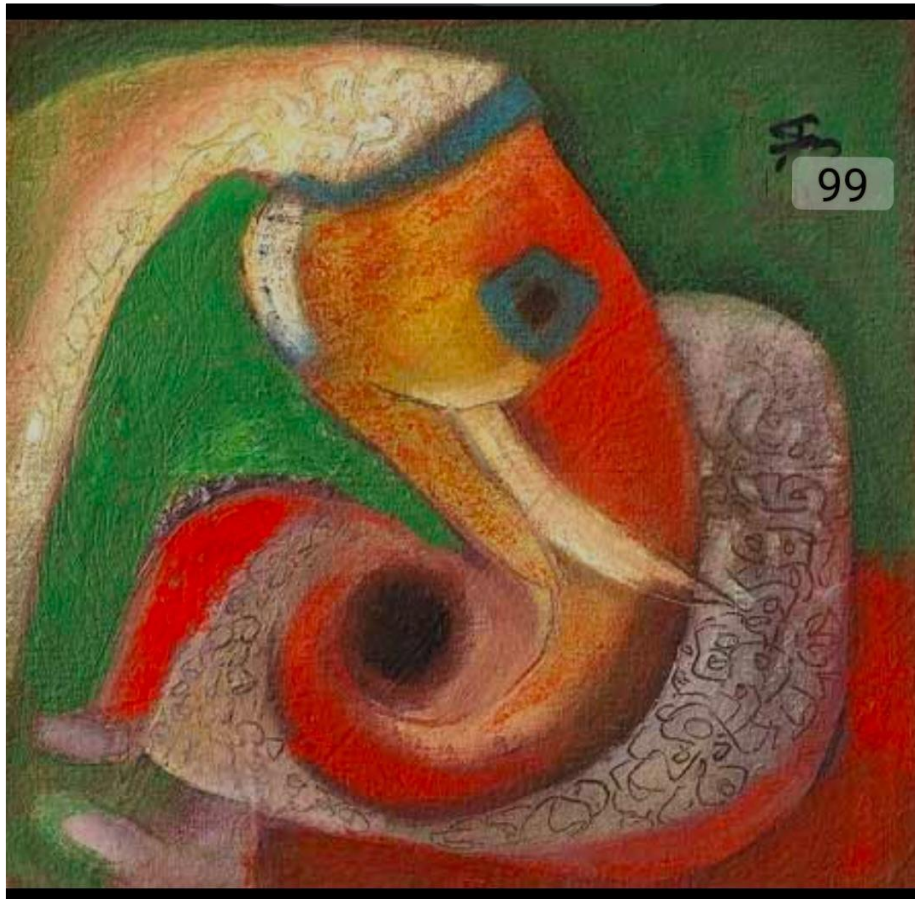
The life of an animal can be observed to run parallel to that of a man, never to be mistaken with The two parallel lines only converge in death, and they may then cross across to become parallel once more after death. For this reason, there is a common notion that souls transmigrate.⁸



Painting-1, Title: Hieroglyphs, Medium- Mixed Media

Painting1, resembles a buffalo, standing dirty and above the water. The village identity is examined in the picture, where naturalism and individual individuality are explored. The perspective of humans and animals, which is related to social life and its changes, is both directly and indirectly related to the painting. In this artwork, Neelpawan Baruah deftly examines the idea that animals can bring tranquillity and a sense of home to promote social

progress and sustainable development. This implies that an animal can serve as a medium or point of view for creative inquiry. The painting is titled "Hieroglyphs," and it uses mixed media to depict the culture that is made up of humans and animals and has an interdisciplinary element as well as a relationship with one another for the growth of society.⁹



Painting -2, Title: Hieroglyphs, Medium- Mixed Media

Painting-2, accentuates the elephant's face with its vibrant colours and ornate background. It looks highly imaginative, vivid in hue, and with a profound inner vision. The picture displays a distinct kind of arrangement with blended colors. The elephant resembles the god Ganesha, who removes all of our barriers. Artist Neelpawan Baruah intended to use compositions with humans and animals to exhibit his insightful ideas. We can see from the artwork that an animal's identification can function as a god's identity and contribute to mental tranquility and cognitive development. The artwork, titled "Hieroglyphs," is a mixed-media representation of the culture that humans and animals have co-created to advance society. It features an interdisciplinary aspect and interpersonal relationships that are the foundation of contemporary art and culture.¹⁰



Painting-3, Title: Hieroglyphs, Medium- Mixed Media

Painting- 3, concentrates on the blend of human and animal faces with faded colors in musical instruments. The painting demonstrates how mixed media may be used to study mixed cultures. Neelpawan Baruah's mixed-media paintings, which combine the cultures of humans and animals, are examples of his unique invention. Additionally, it is evident that humans and animals share a great deal in terms of behavior, nature, individuality, identity, and character. Lastly, mixed-media artist Neelpawan Baruah uses his emotions to explore how both animal and human behaviors are developing. The mixed-media artwork "Hieroglyphs," which takes its name from the animal species, aims to illustrate the multifaceted and interwoven character of the human-animal composition for the advancement

of society and the catalyst for social change, a concept that can only be represented via the arts.¹¹

Major Findings of the Study:

The Major Findings of the Study Are-

1. The three selected mixed-media pieces by Assamese visual artist Neelpawan Baruah, titled "Hieroglyphs" (named after the animal species), are part of a series that aims to illustrate the complex and interwoven nature of the human-animal composition for the advancement of society and as a catalyst for social change. This is a concept that can only be represented through the arts, and it is a great symbol for Assam and global contemporary art, which is a source of pride for today's visual artists.
2. Contemporary art can occasionally provoke profound thoughts. This is due to the fact that it uses images rather than words to communicate.
3. Exposure to stimuli that elicit thoughts and emotions is made possible for people. It may result in fresh knowledge, learning, and development for a lot of people.
4. Contemporary art helps us comprehend the world around us and gives our life purpose.
5. It is a vital component of our culture because it gives us a better knowledge of our feelings, heightens our awareness of ourselves, and makes us more receptive to new concepts and experiences.
6. Abstract, experimental, and process-based art are common in contemporary modern art. It also frequently incorporates new media, including computer-generated images, video, and photography.
7. Contemporary art created by the contemporary artists who can be contentious and provocative, frequently aiming to subvert conventional norms and values.
8. In the life of many individuals, animals hold a significant place.
9. Neelpawan Baruah's creative work oscillates between the domains of figurative narrative and pure abstraction. These oscillations are caused by certain psychological forms that are imbued with intensely held emotions and raw passion. These forms are a result of his sensitive creative impulse, which shapes perception and dictates the stylistic expression.
10. Realizing that animal and human hybridization has happened in the area of cultural evolution even more than in the fields of biotechnologies and genetic engineering is a crucial first step toward developing a thorough understanding of the intricacy of the relationships between humans and animals in culture.

5. CONCLUSION

Art is an integral aspect of the human experience, not just a luxury. It improves our quality of life, sparks our imagination, and promotes intercultural understanding. Art serves as a medium for both introspection and interpersonal communication. The vast cultural legacy of Indian folk art and crafts exemplifies the diversity of Indian culture. These artistic traditions have been handed down through the ages and are now essential to the preservation of India's cultural identity.

Contemporary artists give voice to the vast and dynamic cultural landscape of identities, values, and beliefs in a world that is globally impacted, culturally diverse, and

technologically advanced. People who view art actively participate in the process of creating meaning around it.

Since artists have historically looked forward more than any other member of society, we should stop considering the inclusion of animals in art as a straightforward marketing ploy. Criticism, curation, and art history should address animals, as they have done with other significant art-related issues like women, the work, the urban landscape, technologies, etc.

Although some critics have undoubtedly already done so, much more work has to be done in academia to bring this topic to the forefront of the humanistic discussion. In order to do this, we must further purify our critic perspective and give up the anthropocentrism viewpoint while examining the presence of animals in contemporary art, in addition to using a historical and anthropological method. Understanding the really new potential of partnering with animal alterity requires this kind of survey.

Neelpawan Baruah support communities by preserving cultural history, promoting creative innovation, sharing important social truths, and fostering a feeling of identity and belonging. Without artists, a society would be incomplete, and their impact should never be undervalued.

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