A Study of the Appropriation of Folk Art In Commercial/Advertising Communication In The Digital Age

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Abstract

The world of advertising is a highly competitive market. Saturation in innovation is not a new thing. Communication experts are grappling to find new communication strategies for products that barely have different functionality or purpose. Their survival solely hinges on a unique communication strategy that can establish brand value and consumer engagement in a world that is shifting rapidly towards the digital space.

In this respect, the appropriation of various forms of art, particularly regional folk art, is seen as the safest and most convenient way to penetrate the local market as well as the global market. The practice of appropriation of artistic elements of fine art and folk art has been in tradition for a long time.

Since folk art emancipates from the grassroots and reinforces the values and culture of the people, it is easy for the advertisers to use it to persuade people and connect with them. Ads based on folk art often use popular images and artistic elements to influence people. The re-appropriation of art elements, patterns, motifs and culture with modern technology helps connect with a wider audience and makes the message more effective and lucid.

This paper has two objectives. The first objective focuses on the classification of the diversity of the folk-art forms in advertisement on digital media based on Hjemslev's model i.e., the study of the advertising language signifier through the expression/content of the messages.

The second objective explains the appropriation of cultural characteristics and elements of folk art on digital platforms to communicate commercial advertising messages. This aim is achieved by doing a qualitative analysis of the advertising campaigns of a few well-known brands, which recontextualised Indian folk-art images/pattern/forms to influence people.

Keywords: Digital Folk-art, Appropriation, Advertising, classification, Recontextualization.

1. Introduction

Art is the aesthetic attitude to create and appreciate objects, images or any work which itself is a product of creative activity; spiritual specificity; semiotic trait or a system of features associated with the usual forms of the social organization of artistic culture. Art is a sphere of personal perception, figurative thinking, and fundamentally innovative and non-algorithmic activity (Andreev, Kuznetsova, 2019). Art imitates life. It appreciates beauty and creates beauty. It appeals to emotions. On the other hand, advertising convinces, persuades and influences people to act in a certain way. Advertising incorporates art to convince people. It uses diverse forms of art to construct semantic meaning in a communicative message. Its sole purpose is to create a clear message that generates a specific response and influences people. It is not meant for open interpretation like art (Goswami, Padhi, 2020).

No matter how distinct and apart these two entities may appear. In practice, they seem to share a connection and this connection between them is not new. "It dates back to the 19th century when vanguard artists saw in advertising an opportunity to participate in the urban space artistically and commercially in the form of a poster," (Gonzalez, 1997). This is the onset of art used in the constitution of the brand identity and brand image of the products that are produced massively in the industrial era for the incipient consumer society. However, it took one complete century till postmodernism for the advertisers to realise the importance of art and utilise it as a means to convey effective communication.

"Pop art popularises the images of products and brands of companies in domestic spaces to become a recurrent source of themes for ads," (Diaz, 2010). It oscillated between culture, tradition, irony, sarcasm and celebration (Reguera, 2014). This diminished the boundary between art and advertising, so much so that they both became the co-creators of the iconographic universe of the consumers and the marketing world and became part of high and pop culture (Brea, 2009). Till the age of the Information Age, a new kind of visual culture 'iconosphere' started to dominate the consumer world (Almela, 2004). This dissolves the identity of the artists and keeps the visual images and icons alive in the hearts of the consumer by circulating them through mass media (Brihuega, 2006)

Like today, advertisers then also look up to the art world as a constant inspiration for the creation of communication messgaes (Walzer, 2010). At the same time, it is also true that "some artistic movements use resources coming from the advertising world as well" (Perez, 1998). Hence exhibiting a mutual exchange between advertising world and art.

However, many experts, who viewed art from the stance of 'art for art's sake ' and were purists, viewed this relationship as exploitative and even antagonistic as they were diluting the purpose of the art. But in reality, they shared a symbiotic relationship and mutually support and benefit each other. They together contribute to the generation and at times reinforcement and recontextualization of attitudes, culture and tradition. The creation and accretion of new knowledge and adoption of new, reformulated beliefs and aesthetic values were part of it (Duncum, 2002). And mass media helped in cementing this relationship.

The use of art and paintings in advertisements created wonders. As per Margolin (1999), "Words in the ad can just act as poetry or a musical lyric that can interest us, but the images hit us right away even before we have a chance to comprehend the strategic meaning of the prose/message written in an ad."

Literature Review

2.1 Folk art and its digital footprints

Art has various forms. One of the most popular forms of art among people is "folk art". As per Horace Cahill, 1932, the most cited authority on American folk art, "Folk art is the expression of the common people, created by them and intended for their own use and enjoyment." "It was never the expression coming from professional artists but was created within a small, cultured class for their own use. Such art does not follow any academic tradition but germinates from the personal quality of craftsmanship of the artist and his traditional craft," (Cahill, 1932). "Folklore takes place within the group itself…. It is the artistic communication within small groups and places," Dan Ben-Amos,1971.

Malcolm McCullough (1996) suggested that "there is a need to recognize a new stage in the evolution of folk art and craft, that of digital production." He argued that various types of activities done through computers and the internet get "crafted" when some talented, enthusiastic and creative people or experts within a particular community use limited software capacities resourcefully and imaginatively like images, paintings, memes, jokes, stories, music and video, and reproduction of existent various folk-art forms for various reasons. "To craft is to care…acting locally in reaction to anonymous, globalized, industrial production," (McCullough, 1996).

In India, folk art has flourished in almost every region. Each state has its own folk art, which is unique, ethnic, colourful, and vibrant, and speaks volumes about the rich heritage of that state. With the advent of technology, folk art, that was limited to crafts, paintings, songs, and music of their respective regions, entered a larger global canvass. Many people on social media are now digitally producing and re-distributing folk art pieces and creating digital footprints.

Corporates giants, communication experts and advertisers have also contributed to the acceleration of this growth. They are using, appropriating, re-contextualising and representing folk art in their communicative messages for their own invested interests and commercial gains.

Folk art apparently has a huge potential in the national and international market because of its 'traditional aesthetic sensibility' and 'authenticity.' Some of the most famous folk arts of India are Warli art of Maharashtra; Kalighat paintings from Bengal; Madhubani art of Mithila; Patachitra paintings of West Bengal and Odisha; Cheriyal scroll paintings of Telangana; Mural paintings of Kerala; Baiga artworks from Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh; Pottery artwork and phad paintings from Rajasthan; Gond artworks from Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Chattisgarh; Bhil folk art from Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan;.

2.2 Role of advertising in creation of brand and use of folk art

Digital transformation has impacted all walks of life including the market, consumers and communication. Today's consumer has gone beyond from old traditional demand and supply system. He is more skeptical about the conventional advertising discourse. "They understand the quality and function of products and expect more, 'an added value' or advantage for which he is willing to pay more. Consumers are much more informed and aware of the products' usage and functionality owing to knowledge existing on websites and social media" (Bocigas, 2011). The multi-screen and multi-channel consumer require more innovative communication which should be relevant, useful, entertaining and exciting to him.

Ritzer and Jurgenson define today's consumer as a 'prosumer', "a more demanding and more informed individual that demands excellence and does not just settle on quality. He demands personalized treatment, variety, accessibility and immediacy that too at a reasonable price." "So, this new prosumer can also be seen as the 'co-creator of the products' in the sense that now the products are designed based on his needs, desires and aspirations" (Ritzer, Jurgenson, 2010).

Due to this, the relationship between the company and the consumer has undergone a lot of transformation. The companies are focusing more on innovative communication and better

connect to create improved brand image, brand identity, brand equity and differentiation from the other products (Costa, 2021).

"The concept of brands as social signals is well accepted these days with coherence between brand and consumer self-image regarded as a pivotal factor in user's choice." (Belk, 1983; Sirgy, 1982). Lannon, Cooper (1983) proposed that: "brands are used as a sort of language. Brands tell you a great deal about who you are, where you are in life, what you are and where you are going. Brand choices are as much a part of ourselves as the way we speak, the words we use, our dialect, dress, gestures and language. Brands are part of ourselves, and we are part of our brands."

In nutshell, a brand is defined as a consumer's collection of perceptions (Foumier 1998). It is the associations in the perceivers' minds. (Einwiller, Fedorikhin, Johnson, and Kamins 1990).

Kotler defined it as "the set of beliefs held about a particular brand." "A set of associations, usually organized in some meaningful way" (Aaker, 2004), "and it is separate from the functional product, with the brand being crafted by advertising, thereby completing the transformation process from functional product to immortal brand. Advertising informs consumers of the functional capabilities of the brand while simultaneously imbuing the brand with symbolic values and meanings relevant to the consumer."

"While it is easy now to comprehend that advertising plays as a major factor in establishing brand identity and equity. It is also worth mentioning that consumers are not passive recipients," (Achenbaum, Lindsay, 1990). Joy, 2003 explained that "people took away from communications, what they chose to, and brought existing preconceptions to them". So, brand values are subjective, and "it is consumers and their habit-forming tendencies who create branding; branding is inseparable from the ability to choose. What advertising does is to help control the acquisition of value and give it direction. If we did not advertise, our product would

still acquire a 'branding,' but it might not be one that we would like," a point stressed by McLanghlin (1990).

So, the biggest challenge for the advertisers is to find more appropriate, relevant images to represent habits, tendencies and universal acknowledgements of the people in their ads to connect, inspire and influence consumers (Asenjo, 1998: 53). They need to create the strategy of acceptable perception, engaging themes and universally perceived symbolism so that their ads become more easily interpreted by the public and the message is effectively reinforced.

Here the use of art becomes much more convenient for advertising experts; fundamentally for three basic conditions: "it connects, inspires and simplifies the understanding of the message and differentiates it by giving added value to the product" (Cavalli, 2007).

For this, advertiser's appropriate folk imagery, symbols, and various forms to connect and influence the consumers. "It's symbolic or totemistic content gives brand 'personalities. These 'personalities' are the sum of the emotional 'added values' which the product carries, over and above its inherent quality and obvious functional purpose." (McWilliam and De Chernatony, 1989).

2.3   Advertising and appropriation of the folk art

Rowe defines the term 'appropriation' as the act of reusing existing elements of art or borrowing from work. "It includes borrowing or reusing imagery, paintings, pattern or any part of the image in a novel way. The deliberate borrowing of an image or parts of any art and converting it into a new context and new meaning is called 're-contextualization." (Rowe, 2005).

Many post-modern artists have done recontextualization and appropriation by borrowing imagery or elements of imagery into their art work. "They believe that the act of appropriation allows people to connect, relate and renegotiate the meaning of the original in a more contemporary, appropriate, timely or relevant way," (Rowe, 2005). The advertisers expect audience to remember the original image of the art work and relate it to the new context as depicted in the advertisement. They should be able

to relate to it and imbibe its new meaning and context easily. This strategy had been used widely by artists of millennia too and became popular in the 20th century. The rise of consumerism and propagation of ad images through mass media vehicles like newspapers, magazines, television and social media) propelled this trend further.

The appropriation of art in the advertising industry is an old practice. It was quite common to hire famous and well-known artists for the creation of communication pieces (Walzer, 2010). It helps people to comprehend the advertising's communication message easily and readily.

Advertisement with the proper appropriation of art, smart marketing strategists and creative skills were able to produce right, meaningful impact. It helped them to provide audience a reference and making connection with consumers (McCartney, 2020).

The soul of the whole process of appropriation and recontextualization is 'cultural appropriation'. "It is the adoption of an element or elements of a culture, for preparing creatives in advertising. It evolves around adopting cultural products of one culture or another. Sometimes artists are influenced by the art of other cultures and create different stylistic appropriation for the product." (Young, Brunk, 2012).

The 'cultural appropriations' of art and folk-art elements are quite often used in advertising. There are numerous examples of advertising campaigns that have used such appropriations.

3. Theoretical framework

To define the classification criteria of advertising based on folk-art forms that are featuring on digital media in the forms of text, pictures, paintings and video, this researcher is resorting to the work of Hjemslev, from the field of linguistics.

According to Hjelmslev, any language is a network of semiotic functions and has two important forms: 'form of expression' and 'form of content'. They help in identifying the

classification criteria of that communication piece and also help in establishing the relationship between the signifier and signified, binominal of the Saussure School (Art and the communication message). There are two primary categories under this:

a) Form of Expression (Insertion of art in advertising –ad text or ad image)

b) Form of the Content (Reference of art – it shows the kind of relationship reference of art and the product/brand share).

4. Objectives

This research paper tries to study the classification criteria of digital advertising pieces that have used folk art and adopted representation, appropriation and have used recontextualization of folk-art forms to convey the communicative or advertising message for commercial benefit. The objectives are:

(a) To understand the classification of the diversity of the folk-art forms in advertisements on digital media

(b) To understand the cultural appropriation and re-contextualization of folk-art elements in an advertisement.

(c) To examine the link between folk art and advertising message for commercial gains.

5. Methodology

This research paper proposes categorization of communicative strategies, created with the help of folk art and their relationship with each other. For this, representative advertising pieces were gathered that have reference to folk art. The collection was gathered from March 1-30, 2022 using a google query search.

In order to compile a large and representative sample, specific online searches were

done, disregarding any constrain in terms of media forms like print, video, paintings, audio and performances (mob flash and theatre).

Out of the total results obtained, pieces belonging to audio/visual, print, and outdoor advertising were considered as a part of the sample under analysis. The analysis was focused on the folk-art ads on digital platforms only, barring the fact that they were similar to their TVC or print copy or not.

An attempt has been made to show that each selected advertising piece truly represents the peuliar characteristics of each category and subcategory of the categorization model of Hjelmslev by critically evaluating them as per the theoretical definitions.

However, this is only initial typological research in the Indian context. In the future, it should be further researched and explored. It must also be considered here that all the proposed categories do not exist exclusively in practice; rather they are complementary to each other.

For the second objective of understanding appropriation and recontextualization, purposive sampling has been used. A qualitative analysis of a few advertising campaigns of well-known brands has been done here to achieve this purpose.

6. Classification of Folk Art Usage in Commercial Communication

Image 1: Classification of art usage in commercial communication. Source: Díaz, O. H. (2016). Art in Advertising

6.1 According to Form of Expression

The analysis of the advertising messages is based on text and images used in it. However, it is always difficult to determine whether the text is important or the image. Some communication experts believed that the text is subordinate to the image and some vouched for the image (Hernando, 1994). A few like Roland Barthes (1977) argued, "the text of the advertising pieces could be eliminated as superfluous, as in his opinion, it is the image that performs the persuasive function."

However, presence of only text or image is rare, except in certain cases, when it is meant for some luxury products, to emphasize its exclusivity in one of the media forms (Díaz-Soloaga, 2007). In the majority of cases both codes (Linguistic and image) coexist (Boscán and Mendoza, 2004). Particularly, in the age of audio-visual communication where text and visuals have equal importance.

6.1.1. **References to Art in Advertising Text**

To create differential and unique communication, ad designers use references to art in advertising text, that serves a great purpose of making the message becomes attractive and affective. There are numerous ways to include art reference in the text, it can be done via a naming technique; incorporating the name of a folk-art piece or an artist in the product. This automatically link the reputation and fame of the art and artist with the brand.

In other method designers insert the term "art" or likeable words like "beauty" and others in the slogan to boost the apparent value of the commercial message. There are a lot of examples which has references to art in communication text that are actually famous phrases or story by recognized artists/ folk artists. Some of the social campaigns during Covid-19 witnessed involvement of famous folk artists in India. In these campaigns, apart from the 'patachitra,' the text used is equally important as it depicted the danger and plight of the pandemic through the character 'Babu' and his cat and helped spreading awareness not only in India but abroad also. "Bhaskar Chitrakar has planted the virus right within the scope of a 200-year-old folk-art form 'Kalighat *pata*' – a class of paintings on paper and textile produced by artists in the neighbourhood of the famous Kali Temple since the 19th and early 20th centuries," *Ganguly, 2020*.

Image 2. Corona patachitra: Here babu, the main 12 Character, is running from the virus with his tanpura.

Among the category of naming with references to art/artists/designers is Picasa, a digital photo editing and sharing platform, Renault Clio Graffiti (Graffiti is a street art), and the Citroën Xsara Picasso, launched in 1999. Latest example of Renault is also on the same lines. "Some

men struggle to express their emotions not our designers", Renault for life. In this designers'

creativity and talent has been emphasized upon. Beauty products are also not lagging behind

like Avon is using "Beauty for A Purpose." Recently, Sabyasachi and Tata Starbucks have

collaborated to support the social cause of girl education. The collection of ceramic mugs and

stainless-steel tumblers under this collaboration features Sabyasachi's name and his signature

interpretation of Toile de Jouy (fabric of Joy) —with flora and fauna native to Bengal. This 18th

century digital print is hand rendered by the Sabyasachi Art Foundation. This marketing strategy

has given Starbucks the coveted appeal and brand power of Sabyasachi.
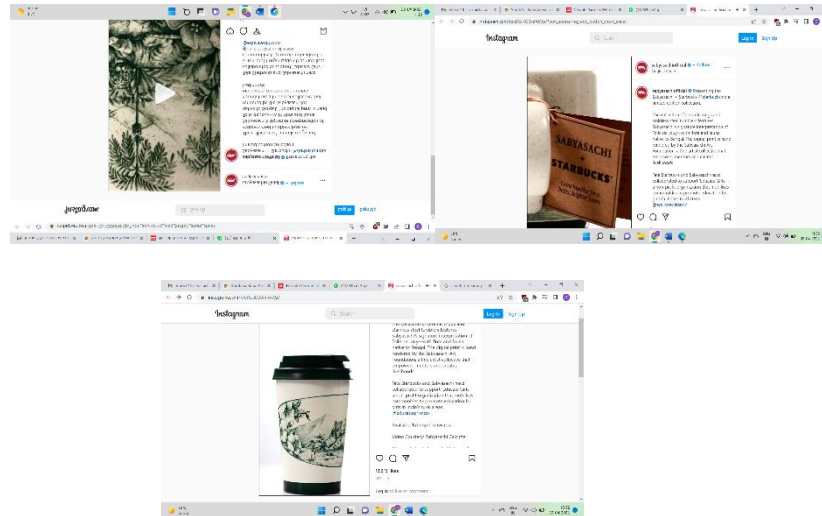
Image 3: Sabyasachi and Tata Starbucks collaboration to support girl education. The collection of
ceramic mugs and stainless-steel tumblers has their signature.

Image 4: Naming technique: The name Picasa, a digital photo editing and sharing platform, was
influenced by the name of Pablo Ruiz Picasso, a famous Spanish painter and sculptor.

Image 5: Citroën Xsara Picasso, a car by Renault, was carrying the name Picasso.

In some cases, the term 'art' is used and there is no dearth of such examples: Air France used "The Art of Flying" in the advertising message, Mont Blanc portrayed itself as "The Art of Writing", Louis Vuitton as "The Art of Travelling", Nokia as "The Art of Communicating" and "The Art of Gifting" by Ferrero Golden Gallery. In some cases, art represents through other adjectives of compliments, like 'Incredible India' and 'India on Frame'.

Image 6: Incredible India: Tourism campaign by India

Image 7: India on frame by Samsung: Here India represents all folk forms of India

6.1.2. References to Art in Commercial Image

This is certainly one of the most common categories of the types of 'art reference' used in commercials. Whether it is the direct use of the artwork or a reinterpretation, appropriation or recontextualization of the same, there are no dearth of such examples. However, the degree of likeness or similarity may vary. There are various examples of art transfusion too.

Image 8: Original paintings by Raja Ravi Varma of Indian Goddesses Lakshmi and Saraswati

Image 9: Raja Ravi Varma paintings used in advertisements of soaps: Vinolia and Sunlight

The direct use of the traditional paintings of Indian Goddesses by Raja Ravi Varma can be seen in soap advertisements of Vinolia and Sunlight. One western paradigmatic example is Vermeer's La Lechera, a 17th century painting, used in the advertising communication of the company with the same name La Lechera. Corona pandemic also witnessed a lot of campaign series where some corporate giants and famous folk artists used their folk art for the propagation of awareness.
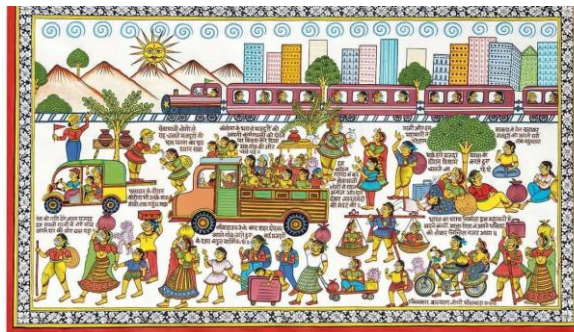
Image 10: 'Migration in The Time of Covid', a Phad painting. It depicts the plight of migrant workers who had to undertake long and exhausted journeys back to their homes. (Credit: the wire.in)

Image 11: Odia Pattachitra by Apindra Swain. It depicts a woman in her finery, wearing a mask and washing her hands in a basin.
It is a departure from the tradition of depicting gods and goddesses. (Credit: the wire.in)

There are plenty of advertisements, where big companies used folk art images as a visual reference to increase the saleability and penetration of their product into the market. Some of the examples are Lipice, a cosmetic company that used Madhubani art of Bihar depicting 'Krishna and Gopies Ras Leela' to strike the importance of beauty and sensuality.

Image 12: The West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development covid campaign.
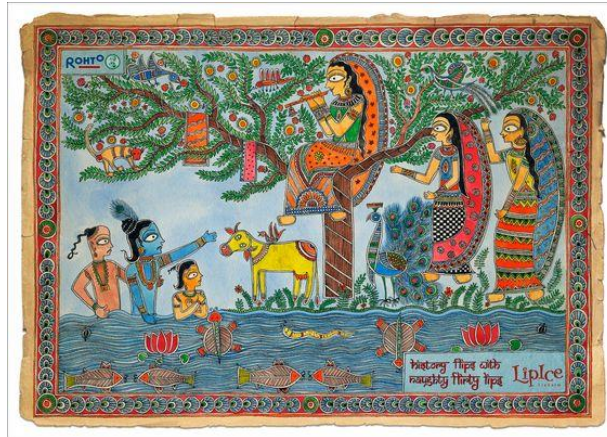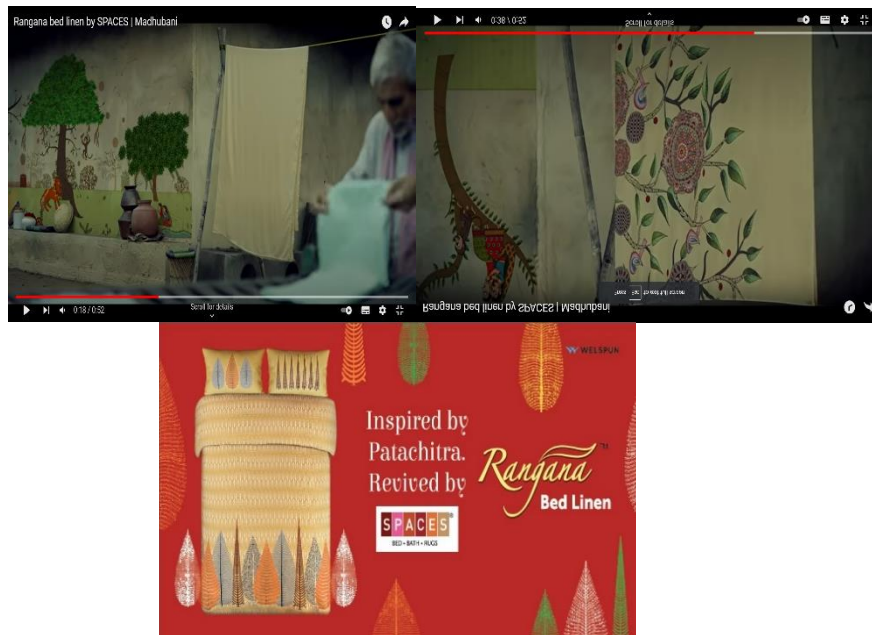
Image 13: LipIce ad showing Madhubani painting

Image 14: Rangana Social media ad and TVC showing madhubani painting getting transferred to bed sheet https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7z_TBWbCFqc
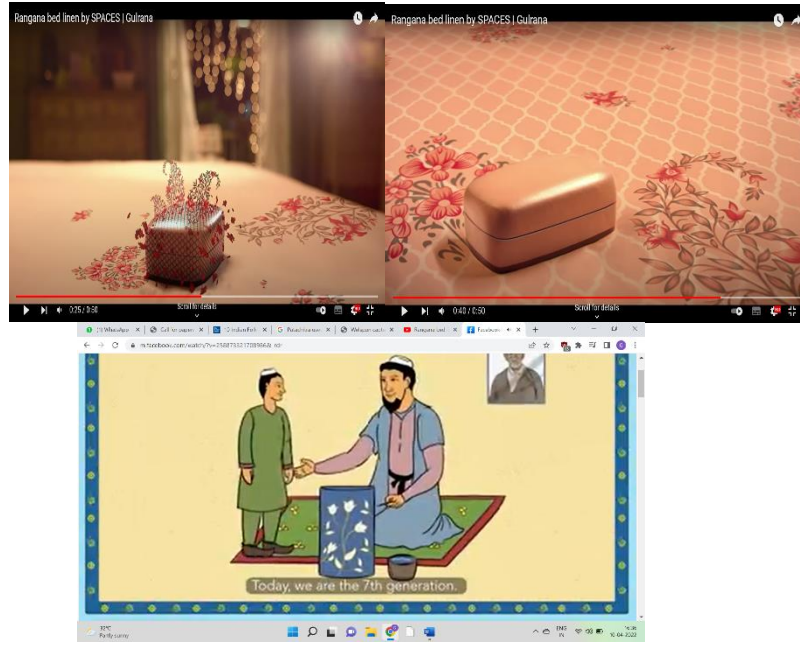
Image 15: Rangana Social media ad and TVC showing Gulnara folk art from Kashmir. Bringing home, the rustic beauty of the art of papier mache with the Gulrana collection from Spaces. https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=258873321708986&_rdr

Welspun planned to create buzz for its products, particularly bedsheets and linen and boost sales at the advent of the pre-festive and festive season through a high-impactful campaign 'Rangana' using folk art of different regions of India in their OOH, TVC and social media campaigns.

Image 16: Fortune Foods, Kachi Ghani Pure Mustard Oil campaign during 'Ilish Festival'

Fortune Foods, Kachi Ghani Pure Mustard Oil, recently released a culturally rich digital video – with a touch of Pattachitra; a Bengali art form and Panchali, oral folk songs and stories in Bengali culture. The brand has cleverly appropriated both these folk arts to connect with the Bengali audience. Bengalis are known for their love for food and particularly Fish. The brand has smartly created an ad film around the Bengali famous fish festival known as the 'Ilish Festival'. It showcases the strong connection of Bengali people with Ilish Fish and how they liked it to be cooked properly with a good oil like Fortune Kachi Ghani, which can certainly increase its flavour.
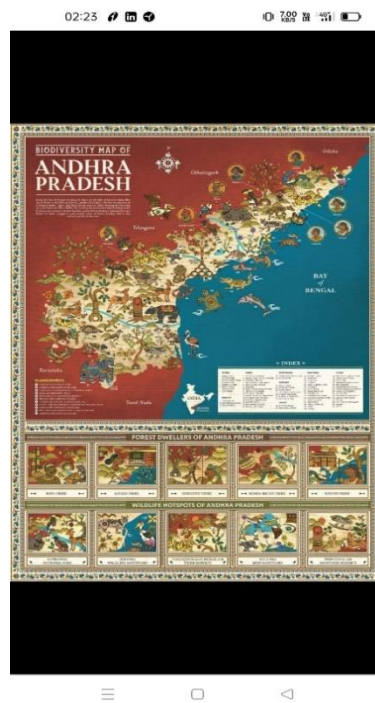

Image 17: Andhra Pradesh forests department biodiversity map

State governments and the government department are also taking advantage of folk-art depiction in their TVCs and social media ads. The Andhra Pradesh forests department used its regional folk art to design a biodiversity map to represent the rich biological and cultural heritage of the state. It highlights six major wildlife hotspots and six forest-dweller tribes. The purpose of this ad was to sensitise people about wildlife protection. All illustrations and the look of the map have been inspired by the style of Kalamkari and designed by folk artist Srikalahasthi.

The tourism campaign designed by Ogilvy and Mather for Madhya Pradesh Government is also an epic example to showcase the use of famous shadow puppetry, Khajuraho ancient folk sculptors, bamboo craft and puppetry doll craft.

Image 18: Madhya Pradesh Tourism..Hindustan ka dil dekho..dil dekho by Ogilvy & Mather, Mumbai

Types of Advertising with Art According to the Form of the Content

6.1.3 Products with Art

In this classification, we would come across numerous cases where we can see that art is becoming part of the product and not going beyond it. They are products with art. It is a mere transfusion effect via inclusion of artwork not in product but in product packaging. It generally does not make any reference to the art or artist.

In majority of these cases, it is not advertising in its unadulterated form, but rather a commercial communication conveyed through a profound packaging. Here, packaging is considered a latent form of advertising whose ulterior motive is to capture the attention.

In this category, folk craft or art is used majorly in the form of packaging, providing a new visual content or look to the product. The idea is to re-formulate the image of the product in order to give it a new identity and more relatable and contemporary look. For example, Vodka

bottle getting a new modern art artistic packaging; the North American Bengali Conference, Michigan, with Patachitra depiction; Rajdhani and Sampark Kranti Express, originating from Bihar, getting a complete makeover with Madhubani folk art, as a representative from the state of Bihar and craft bear with unique packaging all contributing to the image and identity of the product in a novel way and will attract young and old customers alike.

Image 19: Vodka; North American Bengali Conference, Michigan; Rajdhani Train; craft beer packaging

6.1.4. Artification

The next category under the classification of the types of commercial ads in terms of art/ folk art usage is artification. It means presenting the product like an artwork in itself. Under artification strategies integration of art is done with the product/brand in such a way that it becomes artwork as well as an advertising resource itself. The whole idea is to give the product a unique artistic identity. Here, art image becomes brand image through advertising communication.

For example, the company Samsung has used art in the form of a TV Frame for the promotion of its brand image. The brand has introduced 1,400 pieces of local Indian folk and tribal art to the art store of its lifestyle TV **The Frame**. This new collection covers art forms across the Indian sub-continent reflecting the rich heritage of Indian artisans. For this, the company has tied up with Floating Canvas. This unique and creative feature of the TV screen is giving the brand completely new identity. "It will not be a dull TV screen anymore; it will brighten up the consumers' living space with an authentic Folk art piece," said Raju Pullan, Senior Vice President (Consumer Electronics Business) Samsung, India.
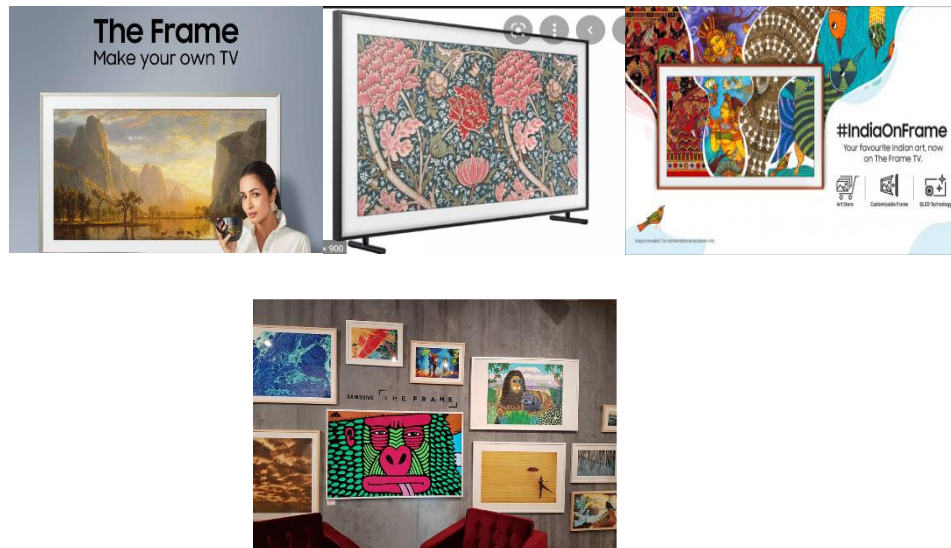

Image 20: Samsung 'IndiaOnFrame' series inspired by Indian folk paintings

De Beers has also used the idea of a diamond as an art piece in the promotion of its image. It likened diamonds to the art of life that should be preserved and protected. The ad builds up the idea that diamonds are unique and rare pieces of art and are meant for forever. 'Diamonds are forever. On the same lines, Nescafé Dolce Gusto campaign is "the modern art of coffee". It is carrying the word "art" both in its tagline as well as TVC visuals. With the slogan "the modern

art of coffee", the ad emphasizes the innovative design of the coffee maker, showing the TVC

with several classic artworks conversing with each other and terming the coffee maker as a work

of modern art and considering it as a new piece of the art collection.

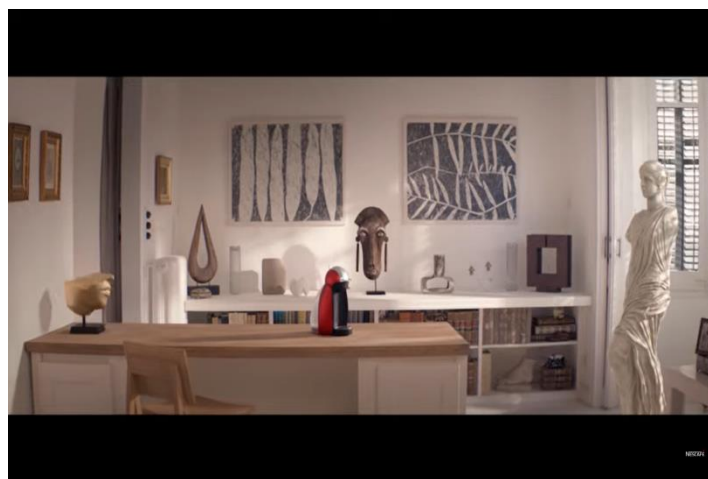Image 21: De Beers ad celebrating life and diamond as an art

Image 22: Several artworks talking in the ad about the coffee maker; Frida Piccolo Model based on the artwork of Frida Kahlo.
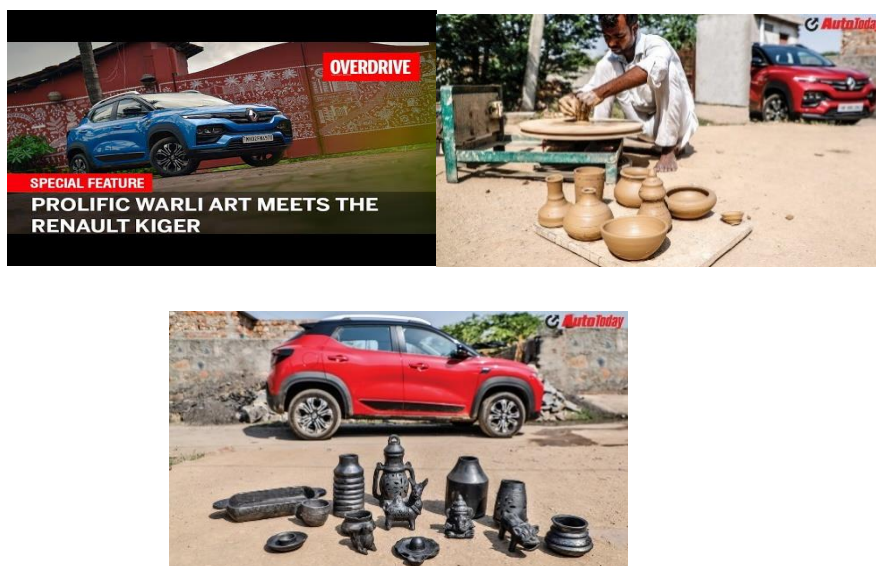

Image 23: Renault 'Vocal for Local drive' campaign

Renault latest 'Vocal for Local drive' campaign to promote Rajasthan folk art and craft featuring the car with different forms of pottery unique to Rajasthan only is also a strategy of equating the brand with Folk of Indian regions and penetrating into rural India as well.

6.1.5 Publiart

Publiart is a new genre in the classification category of advertisements. "It is a new advertising genre because no other expression could be found to give these new advertisements that seem like less commercial messages and more like artwork. This is the art created exclusively for promoting a product in such a way product becomes an object of artistic treatment and experimentation's" (Gurrea, 1998).

Image 24: BMW'S Art Cars

In this case, brand management goes one point beyond advertising communication. A paradigmatic example is BMW

Art Cars. This was originally a corporate idea but the brainchild of a French art dealer and sometime a racing driver Hervé Poulain. However, after the art car became a huge hit with the public in the 1974 Le Mans endurance race, it became a regular feature and the brand owners decided to fund the project. To date, nineteen Art Cars have been created, though they

do not appear regularly.

Many famous artists like Jeff Koons, David Hockney, Andy Warhol, A. R. Penck, Matazo Kayama, and Esther Mahlangu were called to convert the motorized canvass of BMW sports car into art pieces. Art Cars were not designed for commercial and marketing purposes, rather they reflect the designer's personality and are his side project. The cars could even be considered the ultimate expression of the designer's artistic sensibilities. And this was a great boost to the brand identity indirectly.

The other example is Absolut Vodka. It hired famous artist Andy Warhol, as the first of a series of talented artists for illustration on its popular bottles. "In 1986, the artist participated in the in the movement named 'Absolut Art'. As a result, it is the advertising piece that is elevated to the category of artwork17 and not the product, which differentiates this type of ratification." (Díaz and Martin, 2016).
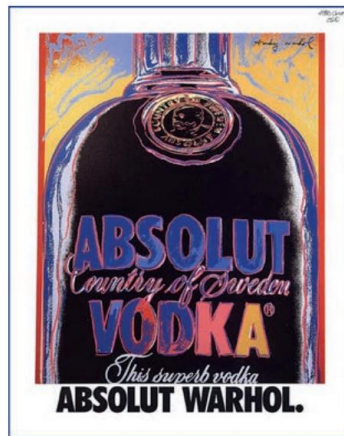

Image 25: Illustration by Andy Warhol for Absolut Vodka (1986)

Image 26: COCA-COLA started 'Salute to folk art' exhibition 1996

To celebrate this tradition of folk art, COCA-COLA started the 'Salute to folk art' exhibition to coincide with the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta. The inspiration for the exhibition came from American folk artist Howard Finster, 'grandfather' of American folk art, who has used images and legends about Coca-Cola in his work since the I970s.

Artists from 54 countries produced original works for the exhibition. All of these artists used the basic canvas of a bottle - an oversized (2 to 12-foot high) Coca-Cola bottle and applied their local folk art and indigenous materials to convert it into an art piece. "The result is an intriguing collection of one-of-a-kind contour bottles, which continues to expand as additional countries contribute their artistic interpretations and gave boost to the brand across countries,"

Jacques Lange.

6.1.6 Branding Art

The last category is Branding Art. "It is the implementation of the artistic focus of brand management via corporate art." (Diaz, Martin 2016).

One such paradigmatic example is Mustang, a shoe brand which has transformed its headquarters in Elche into an art gallery -Mustang Art Gallery (MAG). This art-infused workplace is designed to promote contemporary art. Roca, the sanitation brand, is also following the same path. It has created five brand experience spaces - Roca Madrid Gallery, Roca Barcelona Gallery, Roca Shanghai Gallery, Roca Lisbon Gallery, and Roca London Gallery. Here, brand products are showcased as pieces of art.

"The main objective here is to provide the public with a visual and interactive experience. It is an innovative concept in which the same premises are used as a showroom and a store window for all the brand's most emblematic products. This space is a perfect showcase of the social, cultural, and exhibition activities of the company and its values. It is the creation of a modern site of social and cultural gathering for visitors, who can cherish the art and culture of the emblematic products and generate brand value for the product." (Diaz, Martin 2016).

7. Appropriation and re-contextualization of cultural elements of folk art in an advertisement and the link between folk art and advertising message.

Art is an integral part of advertising. The cultural appropriations of folk-art pattern, design or elements are often used in advertising. However, the examples of folk art appearing in Indian advertising campaigns are not many. Nevertheless, advertisement campaigns of four companies have been chosen as a case study to analyse the cultural appropriation and re-contextualizing of the Indian

folk-art forms to communicate the commercial or advertising messages.

7.1 **Campaign of General Electric (GE):**

General Electric (GE) is an American multinational conglomerate. It offers diverse services and manufactures products in various sectors namely capital services, aircraft engines, health care, power systems, plastics, lighting, industrial systems, broadcasting, and transportation systems. India was the second country where GE Works' launched their campaign. The company made all efforts to touch the hearts of people through its advertising communication. Since the stakes were high for the Indian market economically, they tried to tap the market by making a bond with people culturally and traditionally. For this reason, they decided to appropriate Indian folk-art elements. The campaign was launched in 2012 and used four distinct and colourful Indian folk-art forms.

The core concept of the campaign was to depict the company's contribution to 'better' the ecosystem. The agency prepared an interesting campaign to reflect the four virtues of the company 'Moving, Curing, Building and Powering' that contribute to the change in the ecosystem. For this, they reconceptualized and re-contextualized the elements of traditional Indian folk paintings like Patchwork art, Saura painting, Madhubani painting and Kalamkari painting. Each attribute of GE's business was portrayed in these ads.
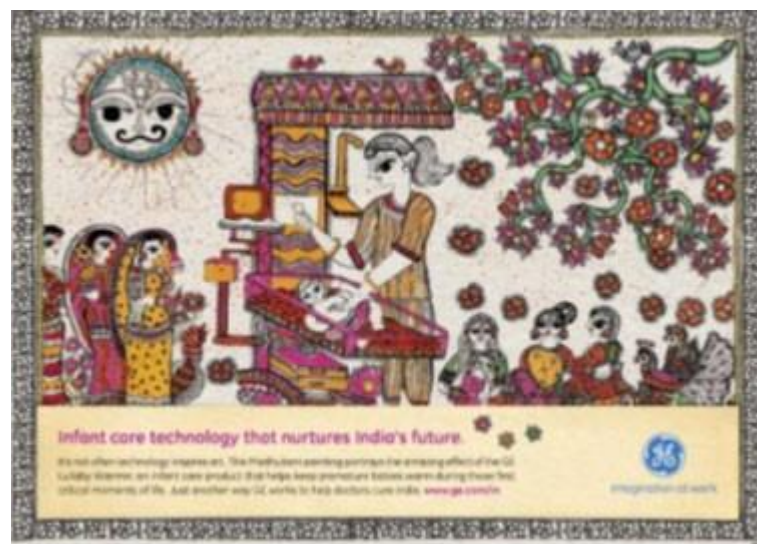
Madhubani art and GE Works

Image 1: Madhubani art and GE Works

This print ad with Madhubani painting exhibits how GE healthcare technologies like "Lullaby Warmer are working zealously towards saving the lives of millions of newborn babies. Lullaby Warmer technology was able to keep premature babies warm during a few initial critical moments of life," (India today, 2010). Cultural expressions and elements of Madhubani paintings depicting childbirth and celebrations were re-contextualized by the agency to symbolise a healthy, safe, and more productive life.
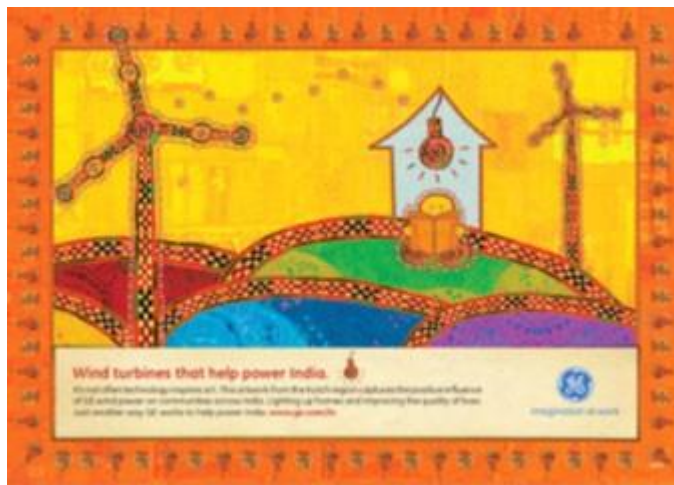

Image 2: Patchwork art

The concept of 'Powering' is represented with Patchwork art or 'pieced work' of the Lambadi tribe or the Banjara tribe of Andhra, Telangana and Karnataka, known as nomadic tribes. They make beautiful patchwork by sewing blankets or painting with carefully measured and cut patterns of patchwork.

GE's recontextualized the elements of the artwork by building wind turbines through patchwork. "A small depiction of lighting a bulb in a remote village that helps a little girl study is presented well with the characteristic colours, fabric shapes and patterns of patchwork," (Goswami, Padhi, 2021).

Image 3: Sura art

The attributes like 'moving' representing the safe transport facility of GE's aircraft engine were represented by the cultural and artistic elements of Saura painting. The advertisement with people, the plane, patterns filled with white and red use of colours is a great example of appropriation of motifs and folk art for the communicative message. These paintings are tribal paintings of the Sauda tribes. This tribe belongs to Odisha and these paintings have religious significance as they were usually made on walls to honour their main deity 'Idital.'

Image 4: Kalamkari art in GE's campaign

In order to communicate the core idea of 'building', the advertising agency recontextualized the traditional art of pen and natural dye 'Kalamkari art'. "This is 3000 years-old-art originated from Machilipatnam and Chittor of Andhra Pradesh. The presentation of traditional motifs-- a group of women, a king on the chariot, notes flying in the air, peacock, tree, buildings, chimney in green, black, and golden yellow colour represents modernity," (India today, 2010). They depict the financial services, creation of jobs and business opportunities built by GE Capital.

II The campaign of Renault

The 'Vocal for Local drive' campaign of Renault Kiger stands for grandeur, stability, control and great long travel with comfort. To represent this the ad-makers chose to appropriate the folk craft elements of Rajasthan pottery namely: blue pottery, black pottery and kagazi pottery which represent grandeur, hospitality, culture and tradition.

With this campaign Kiger, Renault "reiterated its commitment to the Indian market by releasing a product that's made in India and for India. With this approach, Renault Kiger chose Rajasthan and its folk art to connect with the people. They created a TVC that showcased the arid landscape and grandeur of the centuries-old palace, Havelis, and local art forms, specifically pottery, to connect with the people. The campaign also tried to give voice to the creations of artisans and spread awareness of their craft across the country," Overdrive, 2021.

The virtues of grandeur, beauty and stability were represented by the presence of havelies, palace and blue pottery; and black and Kagzhi pottery symbolises common people, their needs and concern for durability. Black Pottery originated from Sawai Madhopur whereas Blue Pottery arrive from Persia in Jaipur. Both showed a diverse reach of people and travelling from humble homes to palaces showed the diversity of the brand as well as Indian people.

Image 1: Renault Kiger in Rajasthan

III. Coke campaign

The soft drink company Coke in its 'Come home on Deepawali' campaign experimented with'Warli art'. They re-contextualization 'Warli art' in its campaign 12 years ago. The company used combinations of media forms like TVC, Hoardings and print ads. The Warli art originated from the tribal belt of the North Sahyadri Range in Maharashtra, India. Since all folk art carries grassroots sentiments, coke tried to connect with people emotionally. Coming home itself had an emotional appeal that was perfectly appropriated by the folk art of Warli paintings.

Click on the image to play the TVC

Image 2: Coca cola Warli art campaign

IV Samsung India on Frame Campaign

Image 3: Samsung

The latest campaign launched by any company featuring folk art is by Samsung. The company launched the campaign in 2022 and introduced 1,400 pieces of local Indian folk and tribal art in 15 different art forms of the country.

The basic motto was to appeal to the aesthetic senses of the consumers and provide them with a great piece of artwork in the form of a TV frame. Here nothing less than the great art pieces of Indian

folk culture would charm the Indian customers, including the elite and common. These TV frames offer unique art forms that match consumers' taste, style and liking toward a particular art. It is a great way to give consumers' living spaces a distinct touch of art. It certainly enhances the aesthetics of living spaces with a premium cinematic experience. Hence, designers of Floating Canvas Company and advertising agency of Samsung focused on this aspect and made folk art a part of Indian customers' living rooms.

8 Conclusion:

The practice and concept of using folk art imagery in advertising have not been experimented with much in India. However, the success of the campaigns like Coca Cola, Renault, Samsung and GE works proves the fact that recontextualization and appropriation of folk art can influence and convince people through the emotional connection. This certainly increases the brand value, brand image and brand equity of any product.

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1. 'vanguard' (French word: fore-guard) is **a person or work that is experimental, radical, or unorthodox with respect to art, culture, or society**.