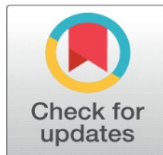
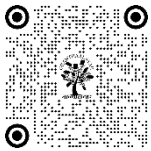


KRISHNA REDDY: AN ARTIST EXPLORING THE MANY FACES OF NATURE THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF INDIFFERENCE

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ABSTRACT

The article presents adverse aspects of print making in India particularly highlighting and making critical assessment on various works of Krishna Reddy. The paper attempts to decipher the experimental works that the artist had created during his lifetime. A brief historical account beginning from his first poster rebellion for quit India movement, his time at Shantiniketan and major influences on his life particularly in his work at Hatelier, shall be discussed by analysing his life and works. Secondly, select pieces of some of his famous artworks are discussed with the author's critical perspective. Focusing on subject matter, medium and form of the pieces; Reddy's brilliance and finesse is brought to light. The vibrance in his works, dynamics of colours existing in 2D frames as a form of living art and the stories that emerge to both an experienced observer or not is discussed at length. Revealing the inner connections of motherhood, happiness, trauma, and mundanity evoked by his prints is reflected upon with care and dedication. Discussions are also put forth on the thematic connection between his arts using the deductions arrived from the lens of subject matter, form and medium of encoding information. The decoded material are layed out within the context of feelings, visuals and narrative elements. In conclusion, his legacy and influence on artists and aestheticians, resonating endlessly with time is discussed. His exuberance expressed as arts exceeds far beyond many forms of artistic expression, where his creativity is an outgrowth of his meticulous combination of engineering paints and his precise balance of viscosity.

Keywords: Krishna Reddy, Printmaking, Subject matter, Medium, Form

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the first marvels of printmaking art, the Gutenberg's bible printed in 1455 is a confluence of engineering and mastery of craft. Dating from early 7th century printmaking in different forms has existed in ancient China (Elisha, 2009). Printmaking due to its insufficient dissimilarity from previous prints have been criticized whether it possess artistic merit. Abell (Abell, 2015) argued that the intentional control of the matrix mechanics while producing the prints possess in itself the abstract sense of distinctness not included in other drawing techniques. Therefore, printmaking does indeed possess the necessary qualities of art and contains the creativity of the artist in them. To shine the light on the creativity for the art of printmaking, it is difficult to choose whom to focus on. However, Krishna Reddy is an interesting figure who merits an inquiry for various reasons presented in this work.

Among the greats of printmaking, Krishna Reddy of India is one of them. He was known for his pioneering work for viscosity printing, and considered a master printmaker artist in intaglio process as well. In the past critics have encapsulated his works in their own verbal mastery and his biographical narration. In this work, the important art pieces

will be entertained with a playful criticism. Firstly, a brief historical biography is discussed. Secondly, his major art pieces are entertained with criticism of a different style, a playful criticism, yet following the existing criteria for criticism as described by Terry Barrett at Ohio State University in his article "Criticizing Art: Understanding the Contemporary" (Barrett, 2012). The present criticism will not only include, descriptive, interpretive and positive reflection on each of Reddy's art pieces but also its modern perspectives that evinces in the contemporary. Internal information regarding aspects of the artist, time which the art was made will also be included in the process wherever possible. In the second analysis, focus will be placed on (1) subject matter – representations, objects, events, imageries inside the pieces will be discussed (2) medium – the medium where the pieces was made will be dissected with vigor and evoking thoughts (3) form – every art contains in itself aspects of realism, abstractness, representational, meticulous planning or spontaneous action which evokes feelings and inspiration in the contemporary sphere is discussed here. In addition the formal element of the work such as geometry, lighting, color, texture, mass, space including volume and their effects upon the observer (Barrett, 2012). In the final/third section Reddy's legacy and his resonance among other fields of inquiry and aesthetics is briefly discussed with a conclusion.

2. HISTORICAL VIEWPOINTS

2.1. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Krishna Reddy was born on 15th of July 1925, in a small village near Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh, before India declared independence from the British rule (Indira Gandhi National Centre For The et al., 2011). Before his journey as a printmaker, his early life was involved in participating protest for Quit India movement ignited by Mahatma Gandhi leading upto to his fame for his various works such as the whirlpool. Being in jail multiple times because of his participation in violent protests by pasting various posters at night following the National upheaval during 1942 (Indira Gandhi National Centre For The et al., 2011). He is well-known for pioneering the color viscosity technique where he melded two print-making techniques (1) relief and (2) intaglio process during the 1950's. His first encounter in the techniques of printmaking art was during his Diploma years (1942–1947) at Visva-Bharti University Santiniketan (Institute of Fine Arts) established by the Indian Nobel laureate (in literature) Rabindranath Tagore at Kolkata. Studying under the tutelage of Nandalal Bose, he completed his Diploma in Fine Arts at the institute developing a love for woodcut, engraving, etching and lithography techniques including botany and biology. Spanning from 1940's till the 80's Reddy's experience and skill has been embalmed, massaged and nurtured through his journey from multiple places and mentors. Among his associations the one with Stanley William Hayter at "Atelier 17" studio (Sumesh Sharma, 2016), a place where once Jackson Pollock, Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst, Marc Chagall, Joan Miro worked, in the 50's has been the most influential. Hayter was a practicing chemist before where he pursued the art of painting in his spare time. Perhaps his experimentation with chemistry probably rubbed off of Reddy's work and his pioneering technique of viscosity printings that he developed during the 50's. Reddy was the first Indian to be appointed director of the famous "Atelier 17" (DAG World, 1993).

2.2. MOTIVATIONAL SPARKS

At a time where the subject of painting was considered an option of career death during the 1940s, Krishna Reddy did not lose his artist's notion of romance with printmaking and flourished in Europe. In the subsequent section, Reddy's art pieces will be examined with a critical playful perspective along with a brief historical detail.

3. ARTWORKS AND THEIR CRITICIS

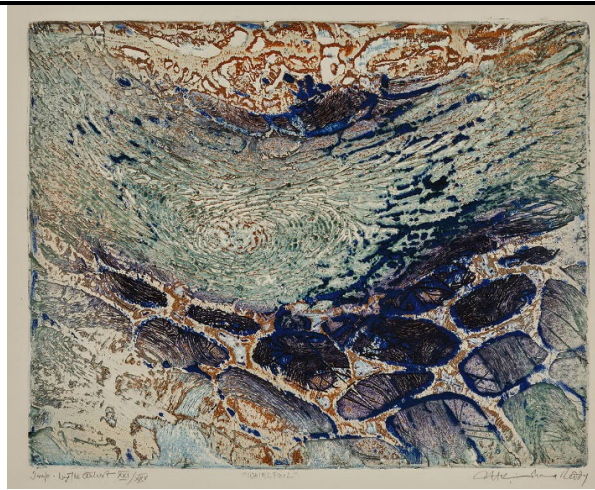


Figure 1 Whirlpool 1963 (Etching in colours on hand-made Japan)

CRITICISM BASED ON SUBJECT MATTER: In its original form, Reddy tries to capture the essence of moving, cascading, churning whirlpool with its inherent animosity economically lensing over a single rotating vortex. Encapsulating nature in motion to a static picturesque expansion with only its rudiments.

CRITICISM BASED ON MEDIUM: Adorned with mixed colour intaglio, perhaps he was akin to get his hands dirty in the process of merging many concepts to begin his new forms of experimentation. Influencing today's generation by his versatile and immersive practice with multiple forms (Experimenter, 2019), Whirlpool was among the beginning of his creative test.

CRITICISM BASED ON FORM: Whirlpool captures a careful, different mix of the colours especially the blue hue – Peacock blue, Prussian blue, Burnt Sienna, Aqua marine, Burnt Amber, Black, Navy Blue and Gray – to name a few. The name “whirlpool” is due to the complex nature of circulating curls near left quadrant of the etchings above that carries a hint of a thumbprint. A textural overview reveals a sense of rings of the wood or a fresh geode rock cut open. On a personal note, the markings is quite a profound indicative of a person with synesthesia.



Figure 2 Group of Trees 1963 (Watercolour and waterproof ink on paper)

CRITICISM BASED ON SUBJECT MATTER: Resonating a deep sense of drip painting with water colour on a landscape canvas, Group of Trees brings out many emotions and artistic signatures of Reddy. His surrealist notion mixed with dynamic sense of expressions are clearly seen in the long winding curves that has multiple faces. One above reminiscing of realistic trees emulating the mangroves of the tropics with overshadowing an unseen forest behind, yet reflected on the river below.

CRITICISM BASED ON MEDIUM: Gazing upon this work of art, one can see the wave of the hand, the mindfulness of Reddy's thought at the time of its making. The creamy background evokes that thought to the keen observer the notion

of light and dark. With order and chaos rummaging inside the mind of Reddy, that yearning to feed his hunger for artistic perfection with the suppressed knowledge that artist's place at the time was not everyone's cup of tea.

CRITICISM BASED ON FORM: Although the exact information of the spontaneity or meticulousness is not known, a brief analytical sense can be gauged at his childlike curiosity in exploring the path of creative playfulness. Some of the imaginings of many curious minds spanning from philosophy to science to arts concentrates on the main theme of building bridges between different arenas of specialization. The same can be seen in Reddy's works of art where Group of trees clearly reflects the inner workings of his mind.

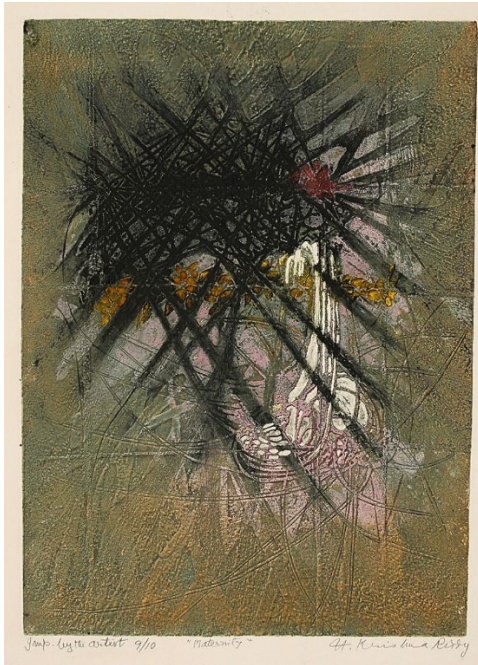


Figure 3 Maternity 1955 (Viscosity on handmade paper)

CRITICISM BASED ON SUBJECT MATTER: Mixing different fluids of varying viscosity, Maternity has been praised by experts to “generate a rare energy by the multiple crisscrossing of lines and repetitive patterns, and blots of bright colours in strategic areas executed by the artist”. It is evident that in art criticism there is very little divide between the three criterions of discussion. However, on this particular piece, the complexity and expertise in achieving the blurry mix of dampy colour coexisting harmoniously perfectly captures a germinating or an embryonic evolution.

CRITICISM BASED ON MEDIUM: The said piece was made during his partnership with Stanley Willian Hayter at Atelier 17 in Paris. Back when his mastery in sculptor and printmaking forte’ combined to create the innovative art of viscosity printing. It must be quite a time for any artist at its prime, best of all to be among the best, this was the case for Reddy. Among kindred spirit at Atelier 17 studio in Paris, perhaps filled with the melodies of Claire de Lune of Debussy and comforted by nocturnes of Chopin. In fact, Chopin became a citizen of France during his second half of life in his rise as a noted pianist, composer and teacher.

CRITICISM BASED ON FORM: Hatchings of lines resembling weaves of black linen threads on a loom. A small dot of red evoking a freshly plucked rose tucked behind the thickness of a woman's hair adorning herself. Spreads of earthly yellow ochre dripped over, cutting across the chest of the canvas with soft lavender color or tertiary color contrasting the black background and balanced by a white hue. From a different point of view, an opposite notion of rays of dark light vanishing over the end like those of shimmering waterfall. Consisting of long exposures in modern photography. Bringing out a flavor of reminiscing the childhood days of unending journey of star counting, where another appears among the darkness as soon as one finishes the count.

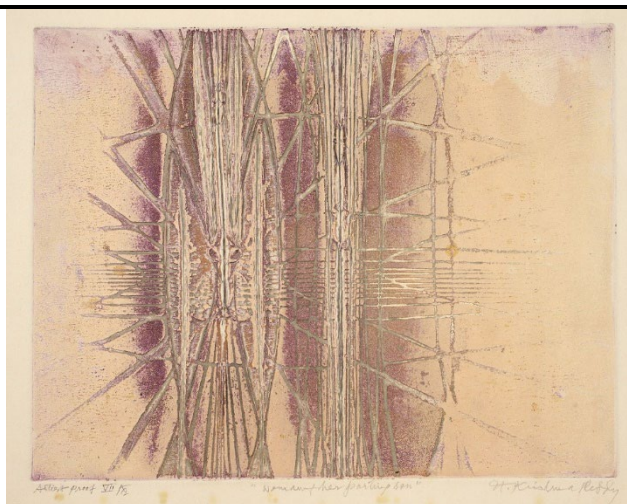


Figure 4: Woman and Her Parting Son (Viscosity on Handmade paper)

CRITICISM BASED ON SUBJECT MATTER: The abstractness of lines and visual artifice the lucidity in this artwork. The expression of estrangement is played with delicacy of conception and richness of visuals and sentiments. Following the nature constantly, his work on woman and her parting son is captures via the minimal use of colour where there is notion of reminiscence and nostalgia evoked by the colours permeating though the subject matter at hand.

CRITICISM BASED ON MEDIUM: Here is yet another piece of the result of Reddy's viscosity technique, this time on handmade paper. The piece does evoke a clear emotional turmoil and abstract agony which may escape many observers which are not careful or sophisticated in their style. However, Reddy's pieces continue to inspire and surprise.

CRITICISM BASED ON FORM: The sharp and legitimate line engraved confidently and rolled over the plate with minimal colours where the tones of colours thickens simultaneously. The lines give the impression of the complexity of women's minds which undergoes in deeper realm than the everyday thoughts. Observing the piece at the middle, there is a symmetrical form which resembles an imitation of a clear reflection on water without the disturbances of waves.

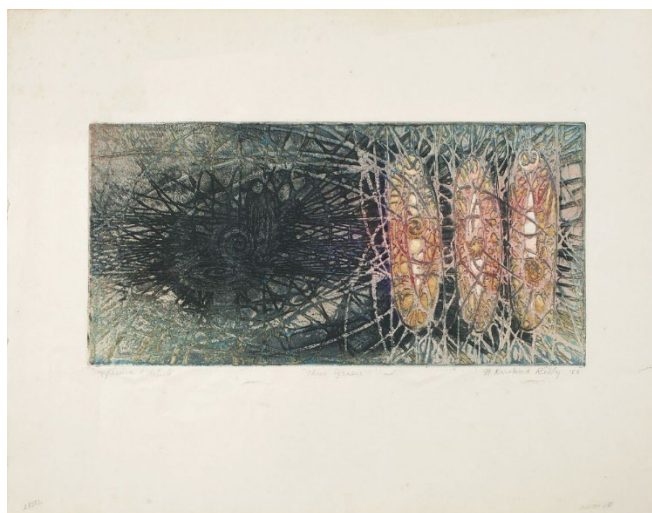


Figure 5 Three Graces 1958 (Viscosity on Handmade Paper)

CRITICISM BASED ON SUBJECT MATTER: This abstract work of art, based on Greek mythology representing Euphrosyne (birth), Aglaia (elegance) and Thalia (youth and beauty) (DAG World, 1993), is has an added difference from the other works of art in essence and meaning. Here, Reddy's significant effort in calling his faculties to express his love for the inner workings of nature is met with the mysterious and grandiose stories of the Greeks. The idea of the long Greek columns seems to have extended to the grating strands of black and white, gracefully caressing the beautiful canvas with a sense of vibrating and radiating energy. Observing carefully reveals three small whirlpools in the region where the dark colours reign supreme, counterbalanced by the three budding bright cocoon shaped wrappings on the

right. The notion of light and dark existing inside of every human being is captured with a touch of interconnectedness by these extended lines of consciousness.

CRITICISM BASED ON MEDIUM: Three Graces rest on a handmade paper. Despite his other work of art on paper, Three Graces lie only in small proportion of the vast canvas. Perhaps this may be his way of gathering focus towards the details of this piece. Textures of dark green and black, with a mix of red, orange and yellow touching within the border inside the rectangular field of view places a certain sense of exactness with a flair of dramatic overtures from the rivers of white and black lines.

CRITICISM BASED ON FORM: Dark green and orange stands out as the major colours of this masterpiece. An art piece of this magnitude has a connection towards the abstract interplay of the conscious and the subconscious mind represented by the darkness and light. A meticulous execution that exceeds all notions of excellent craftsmanship. In this work, a sample of his skill for sculpting with printmaking can be seen clearly through the orchestra of geometric connections and dynamic vigour.



Figure 6 Jelly Fish (Viscosity on Handmade paper)

CRITICISM BASED ON SUBJECT MATTER: A swarm of jelly fish can be a nightmare for anyone swimming in the sea. The danger of its sting romanticized in this piece carefully embedded in the abstractness. Reddy described his work a notion of standing in awe and wonder, as we stand between the vast unfathomable universe (Sahu, 2018). Reddy is known not base his arts on particular events (Sahu, 2018). However, his sole focus on natural and human element revolving around him manifested in the subtle concatenation of dynamism and variation seen in Jelly Fish.

CRITICISM BASED ON MEDIUM: While other artists favour simplicity and minimalism, Jelly Fish evokes all of the four basic human emotions: happiness, sadness, fear and anger (Gu et al., 2019). These human emotions are associated with three colours: red, yellow and blue, when combined in various proportions can lead to higher order emotions such as love and aesthetic emotion (Gu et al., 2019). Within the canvas a mixing of blue, red, black and a spot of yellow tint is seen. Reddy somehow was able to charismatically call out our emotions with the correct dose of proportions in producing this piece through the medium: viscosity on handmade canvas (DAG World, 1993).

CRITICISM BASED ON FORM: As form dictates the imagery impresses upon the observer, the humble hues of jelly fish rewires the brain coughing up pictures of “the judge harry pregeron” interchange in Los Angeles, California, USA; with a hint of a reminiscing beach of a lost seashore or a map. Adorned with royal blue, smoke gray, cadmium yellow deep, burnt Sienna, the paint echoes of a half closed eye looking up to the tapestry of the Milky Way galaxy among the drakness of the expanding sky.

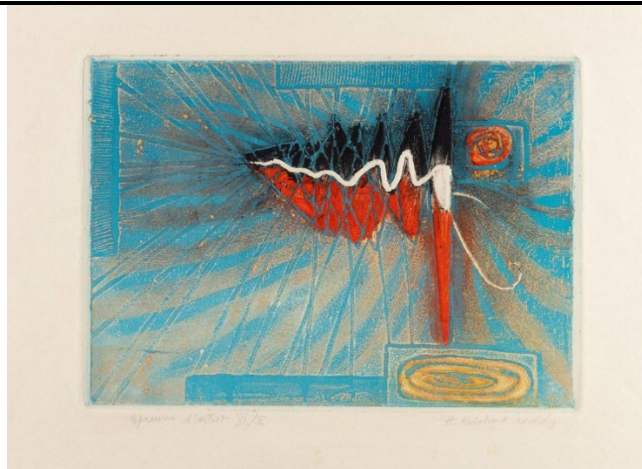


Figure 7 Untitled (Viscosity on Paper)

CRITICISM BASED ON SUBJECT MATTER: At the bottom right corner, there is a yellow spiral of emitting light or energetic pulses that feeds a dying dissipation of light and dark. One can see a pointed red like icicle dipping into the radiating yellow source at the bottom feeding the white strand that resembles the wiggling and traveling in a fading past. The memory of a flame that existed for a brief moment is sort of reflected as receding lines of black mountain hiding behind the rising sun. The inner beauty burst outwards reaching at the top right corner shining but for a seemingly brief moment. Resting on a blue background, the pulsing energy strand radiates in a seemingly high deep blue sky.

CRITICISM BASED ON MEDIUM: Untitled print is another masterpiece of Reddy, a product of viscosity mixing pressed on paper. The embossed pattern resembles a crayon like art. Complex textures permeates Krishna's works, one of which is the "Untitled" one.

CRITICISM BASED ON FORM: Untitled dances with different hues consisting of cobalt teal blue, cadmium red light, Naples yellow hue, with a white tone – transparent Earth red and tinge of Asphaltum. Leaving marks which are not hazy nor discrete, the etching like, graze over sandy dunes of blue ice feel. This particular piece brews a soothing, calming, sea wave like presence with a touch of peace inside a driven mind.

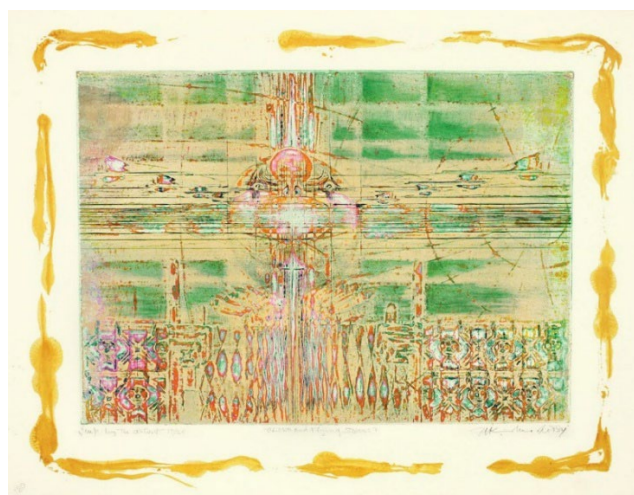


Figure 8 Clown and Flying Swans 1979 (Viscosity on Paper)

CRITICISM BASED ON SUBJECT MATTER: In the year 1978 Reddy and his daughter Apu went to see a circus, witnessing hundreds of clowns performing in simultaneity. Inspired by this experience Reddy composed his Clown series, one of which is the "Clown and Flying Swans" (Shreeja Sen, 1993)

CRITICISM BASED ON MEDIUM: Psychedelic like mix of differently coloured viscosity on yet another yellow tinged frame. His inclination in perfecting the balancing mix of viscous fluids could be a reflection of his never ending urge to

bring forth the ideas of merging various events and experiences. It seems like he is conversing the long lines of reason, beauty, and logical connections through this viscosity medium of a different flow.

CRITICISM BASED ON FORM: The form evinces a notion of Kirigami: The art of paper cutting, which is usually done paper to form repeatable/non-repeatable three dimensional patterns. Kirigami emerged victorious in inspiring even in the esoteric field of Mathematics, in the study of groups and graph theory (Liu et al., 2021). One of the studies in these areas of Mathematics is finding repeatable patterns in the art of repeating graphical patterns. In this light, Reddy's pieces can evoke lines of Mathematical inspiration. The horizontal and vertical lines, adorned with circles of mesmerizing colours undifferentiated and without boundary resembles a finishing swipe of a five star hotel chef servings with yellow ochre. To another, a kaleidoscopic view with a memories of childhood, evoking a feeling of music are called out immediately.



Figure 9 Spider Web 1964 (Viscosity on paper)

CRITICISM BASED ON SUBJECT MATTER: Lets for the moment imagine a scenario where the title of this print is removed from an exhibition. It might not be certain to immediately capture the notion of a Spider's Web to the uninformed mind. However, the abstractness and the chaos emerges as beauty existing in the interplay of geometric patterns along with nuanced softness of a slight touch between the colours.

CRITICISM BASED ON MEDIUM: Spider web is another piece printed with medium: viscosity on paper. The fine meshing details are quite common with Reddy's pieces, with Spider web being the most articulate in terms of enormity in bundles of cuts and slashes embossed on the tinted paper.

CRITICISM BASED ON FORM: The texture looks like slate stone dominate with the thin line of wavy web. Emanating from a centre point or vanishing inside a gravitational singularity, are some of the abstract imageries that erupts at the moment of gaze. Among the various shades of feeling such as happiness, mesmeric passion, one cannot help argue a slight notion of aloneness and abandonment creeps in upon observation. Perhaps this may be due to his profound control over a mixing of colour viscosity in portraying dreamlike surrealism (Oliver Basciano, 2018) that can simultaneously stimulate exhilaration, aggression and pain inside the spaces between the blurry lines.

4. DISCUSSION

Aesthetic perception has been studied from a philosophical point of view and concluded that it cannot be the sum of all parts of the experiences performed by the senses (Margolis, 1960). It was proposed to accept aesthetic perception as a phenomenal concept that refers to our awareness of qualities regardless of the mechanisms that invoked it. From this point of view, the works of Krishna Reddy so far discussed resonates with an air of mystery that creates energetic feelings of mesmerisation evoking a dynamical dance of the tapestry of nature.

4.1. MATTER

According to Wolfgang, discussing subject matter and form as a independent or in contrastive terms will be absurd to the people of the Middle Ages or even of the Renaissance and Baroque periods (Stechow, 1941). It was only when the revolution of abstract art began attracting the attention of the mass that the art critics segregated between form and subject matter. This point of view which was mentioned by Wolfgang Stechow half a century ago can be immediately seen as well in the works of Krishna Reddy. Although Reddy's subject matter brooks from nature's beauty, the manifestation in his art such as whirlpool, jelly fish, clown and flying swan etc., captures the jubilant and abstract aspects of its original inspiration in its abstract form. However, the realization is not in a way which can be tangibly express to a vocabulary of objects but which it can be beautifully articulated in terminologies of color, sight, connections, feelings, timeline and history behind the art. In this sense, Krishna Reddy has achieved a remarkable feat in etching his legacy in the dance of his art.

4.2. FORM

The concept of "form" permeates through the entire body of human works which can be considered as an art. Though some have better public acceptance due to its classical meanings and historical significance, others appreciate forms only on the basis of its popularity and context. All great artists have some sort of a love of form in them. These love of form exists in other completely oblique endeavors compared to printmaking such as the field of Mathematics or science in general, where most consider it be an exacting form of pursuit as it is build upon logic and stale. Among them, Euler, Ramanujan, Newton or Pythagoras, etc., (Matthew, 2015) to name a few have this taste of a love of form in their equations where the natural theories are built upon which have a beauty that can also capture the dynamics of the natural world in static symbols that translates to a form music of mind to the Mathematicians. As Mathematicians did for nature, Krishna Reddy has accomplished in encapsulating the vibrant but sweet chaos of the natural world through his imagination in the prints that are still in the cross-section of time.

In all of Reddy's pieces, one has to observe the vastness of the canvas in its entirety, as an assemblage of all parts. Recently (Boon et al., 2011) artistic forms has been investigated and compared with a concept called complexity as a measure of significance, where they concluded that due to the fractional nature of art, it has more intrinsic value possessing more comprehensive essence. From objective, subjective and social viewpoints in the present analysis, Reddy's pieces present a unique theme of complexity that could be studied from the perspective of computational science as well. Using concepts of entropy (defined as a measure of degree of disorder), and complexity theories, where one is less experienced in, Reddy's pieces possess the necessary abstractness in its quality where method like Boon et al's (Boon et al., 2011) could be used to quantify. However, a quantitative measure is not the aim of the present analysis or any art critic but the fact that Reddy's pieces can be drawn in parallel to the drip paintings of Pollock, there is merit in aligning the above study to orchestrate a harmony of different fields of inquiry where Reddy's pieces can play an important part of.

4.3. MEDIUM

Truth be told, there is not much to be added to the virtuoso and signature style of viscosity painting which he was able to break new grounds in achieving dynamical abstract characters. His ability to manipulate this process and achieve highly nuanced prints via the combination of multiple colors of ink in a lone print where the prints maintain separate identities is a generational virtue, celebrated through the test of time. Using mostly zinc or copper plates (Experimenter, 2019) he carve out his designs, he was able to control the depth of mixing with different viscous colors and produced mixed tonal effects.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on subject matter, form and medium of expression, nine of Krishna Reddy's life's work are criticized. They are chosen due to their extensive information from the perspective of printmaking. After criticizing each and every lines, dots and colors of expression residing in every prints presented above, there is more than one defining characteristic where one can encapsulate his printmaking works. Although many have acknowledged his development of viscosity technique to a level sophisticated enough to have Reddy work with engineers to make special inks to reach the required

depths, here a universal approach is taken to criticize his work. One is the expert point of view and the other from a random observer which can be both a careful one and vice-versa. All point of view converge at the point that Reddy's brilliance permeates generation and time.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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