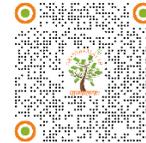


Original Article

## AN ARTIST OF UPCYCLED CREATION: MANVEER SINGH GAUTAM

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### ABSTRACT

Indian contemporary art is engaging with social, scientific, ideological, religious, and eugenic forces. Basically contemporary young artists are increasingly using this approach. This research paper is presenting a case study on Delhi based artist Manveer Singh Gautam. This case study shows the creative appearance of making trash to treasure. Manveer's artworks are made from discarded pieces of plastic collected from over four hundred homes in Delhi. Through this case study, we have made a dedicated effort to understand Manveer's artworks and his themes, with the aim of highlighting the social message conveyed by his artworks and the scientific perspectives embedded in them, which can improve the environment. This research paper expresses social awareness, creative methodology of making and desire to convert waste to valuable articles. Manveer's artworks primarily utilize discarded pieces of polythene, beer bottles, and other waste materials. The aim of these creations is to transform unsightly plastic waste into beautiful and attractive scenes of nature. He collects beer bottles from hilly areas, where people often carelessly litter and damage the natural beauty, and incorporates them into his artwork to raise awareness about environmental pollution and its harmful effects. Manveer's artworks primarily utilize discarded pieces of polythene, beer bottles, and other waste materials. The aim of these creations is to transform natural landscapes by removing plastic waste and presenting beautiful and captivating scenes. He collects beer bottles from areas where people have carelessly littered, thus preventing further environmental damage, and incorporates them into his artwork. The artist has also expressed his true identity through his creations. Manveer's works have been exhibited in several countries, with pieces like "Eco Warrior in Search of Food," "Beercity," and "Nature Covered by Plastic" are masterpieces of art. Their works convey strong and empowering messages to society and promote a scientific temperament, and the goal of this research paper is to bring these contributions to a global level.

**Keywords:** Manveer Singh Gautam, Trash, Waste, Contemporary Art, Environment, Plastic

### INTRODUCTION

Evidence of the development of art is found alongside the continuous evolution of humankind. Europe and American continent witnessed various art movements, including the Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo, Neoclassicism, Romanticism, Realism, Impressionism, Cubism, Fauvism, Expressionism, Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, and many other art movements. In the history of world art, mostly limited and traditional mediums have been used, but in Europe, this barrier was broken by the Dadaist artist Marcel Duchamp. He began to use objects as they were, rather than relying on specific mediums, which gave modern art a new perspective. In the changes observed in the art of several generations, we see the origins of environmental art. In the 1960s and 70s, artists like Robert Smithson, and after the 1990s, Benjamin Von Wong, Agnes Denes, Andy Goldsworthy, Olafur Eliasson, and others presented

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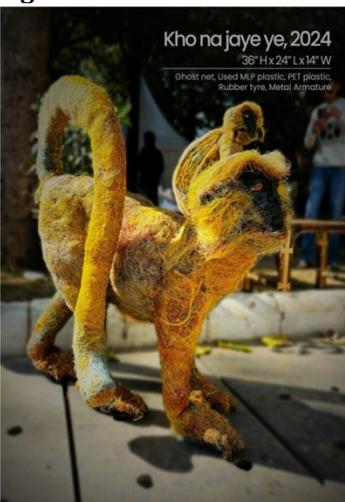
the beauty of environmental art to the world. However, this was not enough. Artists from various countries such as Gilbert Calderon Angeles, Wim Delvoe, Jean Shin, Tom Deininger, HA Schult, and Steven Rodrig successfully attempted to transform waste into works of art. Among these, German artist Ha Schult is very famous for creating artworks from waste and garbage. The book "Trash People" Sim (2014) provides detailed information about Schult's works. The globalization of art has led to the rise of numerous ideologies and art styles in Indian contemporary art. India has countless artists whose experimental work is a source of inspiration for artists worldwide. The concept of new media art holds special importance in the minds of contemporary young artists, the foundation which was laid by renowned artists like Vivan Sundaram, Subodh Gupta, Jitish Kallat, Vibha Galhotra, Jayshree Bhattacharya, Bharti Kher, Hema Upadhyay, Sarika Bajaj, Shilpa Gupta, Jagannath Panda, Shantamani Muddaiah, Atul Dodiya, Atul Bhalla, Vishwanath Mallabadi Davangere, and Mudasir Rashid. As a result, we see countless talented young Indian contemporary new media artists like Girjesh Kumar Singh, Santhamani Muthaiya, Birendra Yadav, Manveer Singh Gautam, and Madhukar Mucharla. All these young artists have their own unique style and medium, and Manveer Singh Gautam holds a special place among them; because Manveer works on both the problem and the solution through his artworks. Manveer primarily highlights issues related to environmental improvement. Due to his connection to rural areas, he has a deep connection with nature. Therefore, his artworks often incorporate waste collected from various naturally beautiful places in India. Beer City, ye tera ghar ye mera ghar, Eco Warriors, Hanifa Valley, Urban Land, etc., are beautiful examples of their artistic style. Manveer Singh's works have been exhibited both in India and abroad. His creations reflect an unwavering curiosity about profound questions of human consciousness. His artwork clearly demonstrates an attempt to broaden the narrow confines of human intellect. Manveer identifies himself as an artist influenced by social activism and the Ambedkarite social reform ideology. He is currently working on several new art pieces in his studio in Chhatarpur, Delhi.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 1 Kho Jaye Kahi, MLP and Other Waste Material, Artist- Manveer Singh Gautam, Image Source- Artist**

**Figure 2**



**Figure 2 Lag Ja Gale, MLP and Other Waste Material Artist- Manveer Singh Gautam, Source- Artist**

## A STUDY ON EARLY LIFE AND ART EDUCATION

Manveer Singh was born on June 17, 1993, into a farming family in Haridwar. After his father, Babu Ram, secured a government job in Rewari, the entire family moved to Rewari, Haryana, where Manveer received his early education. In his childhood, Manveer began showing signs of disability in both his legs. He says, "The problems with my legs started in childhood due to a doctor's negligence. I had a high fever, and a general practitioner gave me an overdose of an injection, which caused me to lose the ability to walk or stand. There might have been other reasons, but that's what I was told. After that, I was taken to a traditional healer who applied some medicine to both my legs and bandaged them, advising me to keep them away from water. However, one of my legs got wet, resulting in a permanent disability in that leg, which was a very painful moment for me." Due to his interest in art, Manveer enrolled in the prestigious Lalit Kala Mahavidyalaya (College of Art) in Delhi, where he received art education under the guidance of renowned art guru Abhimanyu. Contemporary young artist Birendra Yadav was also studying there at the time. Manveer's early works predominantly feature acrylic paints, but these paintings display an extraordinary beauty in their various shades of color. This magnificent use of color attracted him to the idea of incorporating non-recyclable polythene into his artwork. This marked the beginning of his journey as an environmentalist artist, which led to him being known as "The Plasticwala." [Gautam \(2021\)](#)

**Figure 3**



**Figure 3 Hanifa Valley, MLP, 1500 Pet Bottels, Desert Sand, Used Clothes, Fevicol, Plyboard. Artist- Manveer Singh Gautam, Image Source-Artist**

## OBJECTIVE AND APPROACH BEHIND THE ARTWORKS

Manveer has been a music lover and an environmental enthusiast since childhood. He loves peaceful environments where he can enjoy the melodious sound of the flute. The flute helps in concentrating the mind. Most artists prefer to play the flute with their eyes closed, amidst the sound of flowing water by the banks of a river. However, these riverbanks no longer offer a peaceful environment; instead, they are littered with plastic wrappers, beer cans, and broken bottle pieces. Manveer's artworks exhibit three fundamental elements: emotion, devotion, and revolution. Emotion reflects the artist's personal feelings, devotion expresses his dedication to nature, and revolution points towards improving the habits of the people of India. Manveer primarily uses multi-layered plastic, which is non-recyclable and single-use plastic, in his creations. Through his artwork, he is not only protecting nature from the harm caused by these materials but also creating incredibly beautiful pieces. They have connected with over four hundred families through this initiative. These families collect MLP (multi-layer plastic) waste in transparent boxes at their homes, which Manveer calls "Habit Changer Box." [Karelia \(2021\)](#) These boxes are then brought to the studio, where the contents are sorted according to priority. The plastic pieces are then used to create artworks as needed. Manveer strives to express his creations in a logical and sensitive manner. Manveer collects non-recyclable plastics that nobody uses by going door-to-door. A complete monthly record of this plastic is also maintained, which includes data on the plastic usage of each family, showing how much plastic each family used in a given month. This makes it easy to understand how many kilograms of plastic each family uses in a month. Naturally, this will increase awareness among these households about reducing plastic consumption, thus initiating a new process of change in society. This process of social reform has never been seen before. From this plastic, Manveer creates sculptures of wild animals such as leopards, giraffes, tigers, bears, and vultures, which play a role in balancing the ecosystem. Manveer's work underwent a significant transformation primarily through his collaboration with the renowned contemporary artist Vibha Galhotra. Previously, his work mostly consisted of traditional oil and acrylic paintings. Manveer assisted Vibha for approximately four years, during which time his artistic vision and techniques evolved considerably. Vibha Galhotra is currently involved in projects related to environmental conservation. [Kheriwal and Gurcharan \(2022\)](#) Today, there are numerous artists who give special importance to issues like environmental protection, and Manveer is one of them. He said, "Being a devout lover of nature, I illustrated the serene beauty of nature in my paintings. However, I realized that I had been only depicting nature in my paintings. My efforts didn't materialize into

anything that actually helped the environment heals from the effects of our environment destruction. So, in order to make an impact full effort and enliven my ideology, I decided to use plastic itself to create artworks and in past seven years more than three Metric ton MLP and one Metric PET ton plastics I have been up cycled into artworks. Now in Delhi we are collecting plastic from more than 400 houses on regular basis.” [Singh \(2023\)](#)

**Figure 4**



**Figure 4 Tandav, Acrylic on Canvas, Artist- Manveer Singh Gautam, Image Source- Artist**

**Figure 5**



**Figure 5 Unity, MLP Wrappers, Plywood, Iron Net, Staple Pin, Nails, Artist- Manveer Singh Gautam, Image Source- Artist**

## PROCESS AND TECHNIQUE

Manveer's creations begin with colorful acrylic paintings and abstract forms, including artworks such as Tandav, Hop, The Golden River, and The Wind over Ocean. A shift in his medium is evident from 2018 onwards, when Manveer began incorporating MLP (multi-layered plastic) into his artwork. His initial works primarily feature landscapes. In these paintings, single-use plastics are separated by color and then applied to the canvas according to the scene – blue for the sky, brown for the earth, green for the grass, white for the snow, and other specific colors for various elements. Regarding this process, he says, “I remove plastic from nature's landscapes and incorporate it into my own landscapes so that the natural landscape can regain its true beauty.” [Sarkar \(2025\)](#) Following this, Manveer collected plastic from various locations and created sculptures from it at those same sites, generating

awareness in those areas. These sculptures include representations of leopards, eco-warriors, Bengal tigers, and turtles, which fundamentally depict the life cycle of nature.

**Figure 6**



**Figure 6 Plastic Water Drain, MLP, Fiber Pipe, Plastic, Artist- Manveer Singh Gautam, Image Source- Artist**

### MAJOR ARTWORKS THAT HAVE BEEN EXHIBITED IN INDIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

All of contemporary artist Manveer Singh's artworks are inspired by logical and sensitive issues, initially reflecting rural influences, domestic animals, and nature, and later pointing towards social change. During journey of the Himalayas 2024 he creatively depicted the region's rare flora and fauna. In this series, the artist has created a set of five sculptures depicting three endangered species from South Asia. Their titles are whimsical snippets from popular film songs, since the artist felt that one gets to see these species only in the "reel" world of social media these days, rather than in real life. One is 'Lag ja gale: Himalayan brown bear' [Figure 7](#) The Himalayan Brown Bear is visible here in a hugging posture, resembling the natural scenario where it hugs the tree thus. The figure has a violent red scar running across its chest, with plastic flowing out of it. Second is 'Ye Tera Ghar Ye Mera Ghar: Snow leopard Sculpture' Snow Leopard, made of fishing nets, with plastic waste inside its body. This figure stands atop a pedestal resembling a piece of earth, with barren, infertile earth having plastic waste buried underneath. The deceiving glitter of the plastic should remind one of the fleeting deceits of luxury, afforded at the long-lasting cost of environmental destruction. This piece alludes to the condition of this mountain-dwelling leopard today: erstwhile majestic, now reduced to migrant wanderers roaming around in semi-urban areas after losing its natural habitat to rampant deforestation and the third is 'Kho Na Jaye Ye , 3 Golden Langur Sculpture' [Figure 8](#) he Pictured a Golden Langur, currently located solely in the regions of Assam and Bhutan. This species was identified fewer than a hundred years ago, but is currently threatened. The body is composed of discarded items such as ghost nests, egg cartons, MLP wrappers, etc. The face is made from repurposed tires—an urban resource representing roads created by deforesting areas, thus highlighting the human-caused disruption in the harmonious bond between wildlife and the environment. Due to the human-like appearance of these monkeys' eyes, Manveer crafted them from glass, allowing viewers to see their own eye reflections within them. The title hints at the present condition of this species while also suggesting being adrift in someone else's gaze. If we talk about some work which has created in other countries we will start from Africa in 2023. He depicted In Togo, West Africa; the "In Search of Food" installation has highlighted the long-term decline in the zebra population in Africa. Here, Manveer has addressed the serious issues of zebras migrating towards urban areas due to the decreasing availability of greenery and trees. This work is currently on display in a garden in Togo. In 2022 he visited Riyadh Saudi Arabia where he created Hanifa Valley [Figure 9](#). The artwork is about landscape transformation, how plastic replaces the nature, plastic reach everywhere from the top of Everest to depth of ocean. So this time to grab the attention of locals in the Jax Art Festival , Saudi Arabia he brought a piece of desert from history the Hanifa Valley to show that even desert is no more untouched by plastic too. The belly of our motherland is filled by plastic. [Karelia \(2021\)](#) Many layers have been building up under the sand, so this is 21st century layer we added in earth's layer that is Plastic. The crack in land is about pain of nature through pollution. He tries to narrate the story with found images and text on wrappers. The two eyes in image are of young generation who raise a question to us, that is what we left for them, a destroyed Planet. He did several projects including government and private. Among these project Bhuvneshwar development authority and Bhuvneshwar smart city ltd organize an art camp at golden beach where he created large size installation named 'Unity [Figure 11.](#)' In this project he did one day site specific public art installation of fifteen feet collage of 250 small large Olive Ridley sea turtle sculpture out of plastic at Puri beach to raise awareness about the negative impacts of plastic waste on the environment, particularly the sea and aquatic life. He used plastic wrappers, wood, fishnet, staple pins, and an iron nail. Odisha has a special link with the Olive Ridley sea turtles and its long coast is famous across the globe for many mass nesting sites. However, with the plastic level rising in the sea water day-by-day, his work at Puri beach showed the tragedy which is likely to happen as the baby turtles might not feel safe to go to the sea once they

hatch. His work is giving a loud message to make people aware of the pollution being originate could play our tiny roles to contain it. He has used the mythical symbolism of Olive Ridley as it's conned from plastics and how vacation with Odisha's coast line is well recognized. [Sahu \(2021\)](#)

**Figure 7**



**Figure 7 Sare Jahan Mein Shor Hai Dharti Ant Ki Aur Hai, MLP, Clay, Copper, Artist- Manveer Singh Gautam, Image Source- Artist**

In addition to these works, Sare jahan mein shor hai dharti ant ki aur hai [Figure 12](#), knowledge gives you wings, flying carpet, Busherhri topi (Rain shelter), Tiger family, Snow leopard, Delhi darshan, Seascape, Injured Earth, Nature covered by plastic Vol-1 and 2, beer tree, Landscape in plastic, Plastic water drain, Futuristic Earth core [Figure 13](#), High hope and much more. These all art works are made by Multi-Layer-Plastic (Non- recyclable- Plastic). He has also experimented in acrylic colours as we can see in the artworks, Sunrise at Rumbak, chanchal mann during lockdown, Buffalo, B-fall, Hope, Modern relation, Raas leela, The golden river and Tandav [Figure 14](#) etc.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Writing any research paper requires following a specific process, but this research paper attempts to understand the subject through a qualitative case study, utilizing interviews, documentation, literature reviews, observation, ethical considerations, and data analysis methods which provide a collective and calculated process to understand artworks along with the artist.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The research paper draws upon interviews, newspaper articles, online articles, YouTube podcasts, catalogs, portfolios, interviews with the DW news agency, and other sources. Articles such as "Art with a Heart: Manveer Singh B Debi Prasad Sahu," "Artists in NCR Rise to Confront Climate Emergency" by Tanisha Saxena, and "Delhi Artist Diverts 250 kg of Plastic from Landfills: Turns Waste into Stunning Art" were studied in detail. Discussions with the artist and other online discussions were also analyzed.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research paper is to present the growing environmental awareness among contemporary young artists, their creative use of media, logical intelligence, and emotional expression of themes, representation of Indian civic sense, and the transformation of waste into beautiful works of art.

## FINDINGS

During the research paper writing and study, we found that the artist has raised awareness among Indian citizens about the proper use of MLP (Multi-Layered Plastic). Previously, the subject of MLP was unknown to many, but this research paper has created awareness about the correct use of plastic. The artist's works reflect a combination of the principles of Dr. Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi.

**Figure 8**



**Figure 8 Futuristic Earth Core, MLP, Clay, Glass, Artist- Manveer Singh Gautam, Image Source- Artist**

## CONCLUSION

Environmental protection should be a fundamental part of the functioning of citizens and governments in every country today. Many environmentalists, scientists, social reformers, philosophers, and artists, from the past to the present, have worked towards this goal, achieving success while also facing numerous challenges. Manveer's works presents a revolutionary approach to environmental protection. As a result, approximately 400 families have shown a change in their behavior and a reduction in plastic consumption. This is not merely a written account but a verifiable reality. Manveer's efforts have contributed to solving a major problem in India. While this may not be comparable to the technology used in Finland, a country that generates electricity from waste, it is a beginning. Many young artists are now working in this field, giving a new direction to awareness regarding environmental pollution and plastic use in the future.

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