



**SRI VENKATESWARA INTERNSHIP PROGRAM
FOR RESEARCH IN ACADEMICS
(SRI-VIPRA)
Student Internship**



SRI-VIPRA

Project Report of 2025: SVP-2509

**“Arts and Experimentations: Mapping Personal Histories across
Socio-Cultural Poetics”**


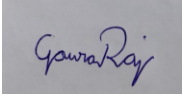

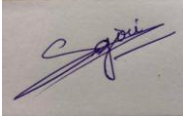


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SRIVIPRA PROJECT 2025



Title : Arts and Experimentations: Mapping Personal Histories across Socio-Cultural Poetics

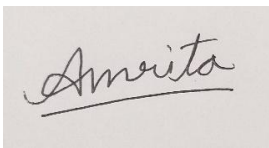
Name of Mentor: Dr. Amrita Sharma Name of Department: English Designation: Assistant Professor	Photo 
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List of students under the SRIVIPRA Project

S.No	Photo	Name of the student	Roll number	Course	Signature
1		Gaurav Raj	0223042	B.A. English (Hons.) Sem V	
2		Shruti Giri	0223054	B. A.(Hons.) English Sem V	
3		Vidhi Singhal	0223032	B. A.(Hons.) English Sem V	

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5		Aayat Shifa Khan	0223031	B.A.(Hons.) English Sem V	<i>Akhan</i>
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7		Kanishka Jindal	0224040	B.A.(Hons.) English Sem III	<i>Kanishka</i>
8.		Ishita Arya	0123049	B.A. Programme Sem V	<i>ishita</i> <i>ishita</i>

9.		Arman Kumar	0624070	B.A. (Hons.) History Sem III	
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Signature of Mentor

SRI-VIPRA

Certificate of Originality

This is to certify that the aforementioned students from Sri Venkateswara College have participated in the summer project SVP-2509 titled “**Arts and Experimentations: Mapping Personal Histories across Socio-Cultural Poetics.**” The participants have carried out the research project work under my guidance and supervision from 1st July, 2025 to 30th September 2025. The work carried out is original and carried out in an hybrid mode.

Signature of Mentor

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Sri Venkateswara College for providing an opportunity to carry out this project. The project enabled the participating students to explore the idea of 'Arts and Experimentations' and gain valuable insights in this area. I would also like to thank all artists who generously agreed to give interviews that were conducted as a part of this project.

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Research Work by Gaurav Raj

As part of the project, research work was done to study the historical evolution of Surrealism and its impact on the art and literature of the 20th century. The findings of the research were presented in the form of an expository article detailing the ways in which the movement impacted multiple artforms across the globe. Andre Breton's *Surrealist Manifesto*, as well as his multiple writings on humor and poetry, were analyzed under a postcolonial lens. The works of major Surrealist painters such as Salvador Dali, Rene Magritte, and Meret Oppenheim were studied alongside major Surrealist poets, who introduced multiple experimental techniques such as the exquisite corpse and automatic writing. The works of scholars such as Mary Ann Caws were looked at to provide a feminist critique of the movement. Lastly, the impact of Surrealism was seen in the field of visual arts such as film and theatre, as seen in the dreamlike worlds of David Lynch, Kamal Swaroop's psychedelic *Om Dar-B-Dar*, and Anthony Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty. Surrealism's influence on modernist techniques such as stream-of-consciousness in literature and magical realism in Latin America was also seen.

In addition to the research article, email interviews were conducted with two artists practicing Surrealist art in India. The first artist, Tanmoy Kayesen, known primarily for his dark and intricate ink-based drawings as well as mixed-media works, was asked about his artistic process. Questions were also posed about his cultural background and the role it plays in his artwork. The impact of social media on the propagation of experimental art was another issue raised, to which the artist responded in a fairly positive manner.

Additionally, Akhil Thampuran, a Kozhikode-based artist and illustrator, was asked about the impact of digitization and experimentation on his art, which is deeply influenced by the Dravidian culture

of the region he grew up in. The topic of NFTs was also brought up, which the artist described as a “distressing experience.” A common theme of alienation emerged in the experimental art of both artists, who, through their works, seek to bring to light a reality that cannot be expressed through language alone.

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RESEARCH WORK BY SHRUTI GIRI

The research article explores the complex interplay between Salvador Dalí's eccentric persona and his revolutionary contributions to twentieth-century art, focusing on how his surrealist approach blurred the boundaries between life, art, and artistic style mirrored his inner psyche and spotlighted the tensions of modernity. It discusses his technical precision, signature paranoiac-critical method, and personal symbolism in works such as "The Persistence of Memory" and "Swans Reflecting Elephants," highlighting the profound psychological themes and visual paradoxes that set Dalí apart. The article concludes that Dalí's legacy lies not just in his paintings but in his embodiment of surrealism and his ability to transform eccentricity and ambiguity into enduring creative influence, affecting both art history and popular imagination.

The artist interviewed in this research, Sudeep Sen, is a celebrated contemporary Indian poet, editor, translator, and photographer recognized for his innovative approach to art and literature, particularly his experimentation with form and style. Sen's work bridges classical techniques and modern sensibilities, often exploring themes like memory, displacement, and love with striking lyrical and visual experimentation. He expresses that his creative process is driven by instinct and a deep passion for poetry, rather than a conscious agenda—valuing the fluidity of experimentation as essential to the vitality of his art. Through his openness to new forms and his ability to balance Indian cultural roots with global influences, Sen embodies the spirit of experimentation at the heart of contemporary artistic practice.

Research work by Vidhi Singhal

The research paper entitled 'Sculpting Chance: Hans Arp and the Experimental Imagination' examines the artist Hans Arp's work, particularly his use of chance. He was a man who viewed life in terms of unexpectedness. This is also due to his life experiences and the environment in which he was born. His paintings and indeed works such as his 'Collage with Squares Arranged According to the Laws of Chance', were not merely about chucking things around and waiting to see what the outcome would be. Instead, it was a conscious adoption of randomness as a tenet, a means of allowing his works to grow organically, as a tree grows or as a cloud wafts, thus achieving a subtle balance between deliberate intention and accidental outcome. This was his quiet rebellion against the rigid, conformist art rules of his time. Arp held the conviction that true beauty lies not in perfection or pure lines but in the beautiful, dirty and organic mess of life itself. His work seemed so human because it was open and in flux. In contrast to modern AI, which employs randomness as an embedded tool in predetermined parameters, Arp breathed chance as a philosophy of existence. His subtle rebellion against strict logic, particularly his attacks on Enlightenment values (in his text 'Concrete Art'), makes his work amazingly timely, reminding us that there is a special and imperfect beauty that technology simply cannot master.

The first interview is with Shikha Malaviya, an Indo-American poet, writer, and publisher who is also co-founder of The (Great) Indian Poetry Collective. The interview discussed how her personal past and memories, such as her experience living in multiple cultures, have influenced her artistic voice and prompted her to explore different forms of poetry. She was questioned on whether the education she had obtained in liberal studies, creative writing, and mass communications helped in shaping her work and how

composing a poem based on a historical woman, Anandibai, shifted her own perception of agency. The discussion also involved how her work as a poetry mentor had impacted her own work.

The second interview is with A.M. Gautam, a Haridwar writer who is the author of the book *Indian Millennials*. The interview centered on the inspirations for his work, such as his youth in Haridwar and his connection to nature. Questions were asked regarding how the economic liberalization of the 1990s and the advent of technology have influenced the life of Indian millennials, specifically their perception of love and romance. He was questioned about his views on the post-truth era and how conspiracy theories have spread in the age of technology. The interview ended with a sharing of one personal experience that led him to pen his book.

Research work by Garima

The research article, titled "Flesh as a manifesto: Carolee Schneemann's poetic Reclamation of Body in Avant-Garde Performance art," delves into the pioneering work of avant-garde artist Carolee Schneemann, exploring her radical use of the female body as a poetic manifesto to challenge and dismantle patriarchal constraints within the art world and broader culture. The paper posits that Schneemann's influential performances, particularly the visceral, celebratory chaos of *Meat Joy* (1964) and the profound act of authorship in *Interior Scroll* (1975), function beyond mere political protest. It argues that these works represent a form of embodied poetry, where visceral, performative acts are intricately fused with lyrical expression to reclaim female agency. By analyzing her methods through feminist theoretical frameworks, including Hélène Cixous's concept of *écriture féminine*, this study highlights how Schneemann transformed her flesh into both a radical canvas and a living text. In doing so, the article addresses a gap in existing scholarship by focusing specifically on the poetic dimensions of her work, ultimately asserting that her enduring legacy lies in her revolutionary ability to convert the historically objectified female form into an articulate, powerful, and autonomous poetic-political subject.

The first of two email interviews featured in this research is with Sukrita Paul Kumar, a prominent Indian poet, critic, and academic. The discussion explores a wide range of topics central to her literary career and philosophy. In the interview, Kumar reflects on her primary identity as a poet, which she describes as a fully integrated and constant state of being rather than a part-time role. She elaborates on how her creative (poet) and analytical (critic) selves are complementary, not conflicting. The conversation also delves into the major themes of her work, including the crucial function of literature in preserving the human trauma of historical events like the Partition and her focus on women's writing as a means of empowerment.

Additionally, Kumar discusses her artistic process, her perspective on the importance of translation in a multilingual nation, and concludes with an optimistic view on the thriving and expansive future of Indian English poetry.

The second interview for this research is with Rochelle Potkar, an acclaimed Mumbai-based poet, fiction writer, and screenwriter. The conversation explores her artistic origins, creative process, and thematic concerns. Potkar traces her writing journey to a workshop that offered a sense of creative freedom from her corporate life and discusses her versatile approach, which is spontaneous for poetry but more structured for novels. She defines "experimentation" as a continuous reinvention across genres and forms, driven by an innate need to innovate. A significant portion of the discussion is dedicated to the influence of Mumbai, which she describes as a "crucible" of life whose contrasts deeply inform her work, though she stresses the importance of maintaining her own unique perspective. The interview also covers how her writing subtly critiques social inequalities, often through humor, and concludes with her vision for art as an accessible "play dough of relief and imagination" for the public.

RESEARCH WORK BY AAYAT SHIFA KHAN

The research into *Hilma af Klint's* contribution to modern abstract art revealed the profound injustice of historical erasure and the transformative power of spiritual creativity. Through extensive analysis, the article explored how Klint's work with *The Five (De Fem)* from 1906 onwards predated Kandinsky's recognized abstract paintings by several years, yet remained hidden from mainstream art discourse for decades. The written analysis examined af Klint's revolutionary approach to abstraction through spiritual séances, automatic drawing, and metaphysical exploration, positioning her not as a curious footnote but as a foundational pioneer whose geometric forms and biomorphic shapes created "a bright grammar of spirituality." To complement the written research, a comprehensive Canva presentation was developed that visually exhibited af Klint's artwork in a more accessible format, to better appreciate the intricate details and spiritual symbolism that traditional academic presentations often overlook. This multimedia approach enabled exploration of aspects of af Klint's visual language that couldn't be fully captured in text alone, particularly the energetic vibrations of her color work and the living quality of her symbolic forms.

The interview component provided intimate insights into three contemporary artists, *Devika Sundar*, a multi-disciplinary artist exploring themes of invisibility and illness; *Mehak Garg*, who works with fragments of memory and domestic spaces; and *Ketki Athavale*, a self taught artist who captures women in tender moments alongside vibrant florals. Through these conversations, the research revealed how each artist's personal history directly shapes their creative practice: Devika's navigation of chronic illness informing her "Essentially Normal Studies" series, Mehak's childhood of constant movement influencing her emotional connection to interior spaces, and Ketki's evolution from traditional work to intimate explorations of everyday beauty. The interviews revealed vulnerability as a central theme across all practices, with each artist using experimentation not as rule-breaking but as adaptation, openness, and personal growth. Most significantly, this research process allowed for understanding artists on a deeper, more personal level, engaging them with questions about their inner worlds and formative experiences that they may not have previously articulated. The methodology illuminated how artistic practice serves as both inquiry

and healing, whether through Devika's transition into art psychotherapy, Mehak's translation of intangible feelings into visible form, or Ketki's desire to leave a legacy of noticing life's gentle moments for her daughter.

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RESEARCH WORK BY REYAAN SHAH

As part of the research project, "Arts and Experimentation exploring personal histories across socio-cultural poetics," an article titled "Exploring the Historical Legacy of Cubism" was produced. This research traces the evolution of Cubism as a revolutionary art form that broke from traditional Renaissance-era perspectives. Pioneered by Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, the movement deconstructed conventional forms, presenting subjects from multiple viewpoints simultaneously. The article details how subsequent artists like Juan Gris and Jean Metzinger expanded on this new visual language, incorporating vibrant colors and collage techniques. It further explores Cubism's lasting impact on later art movements, such as Futurism and Abstract Expressionism, and its continued relevance in contemporary art through the works of artists like David Hockney. Ultimately, the research argues that Cubism's legacy lies in its democratization of art, establishing a vocabulary that continues to inspire artists today.

In addition, two interviews were conducted to explore the role of personal histories in the creative process. The first, an in-person conversation with artist Bhairavi Modi, revealed her deep connection to her Gujarati heritage. Modi explained that her artistic style, characterized by vibrant colors and intricate details, was developed during her master's studies at MS University Baroda. Her process involves extensive research and travel to document the cultures she paints, such as the 'Dang' tribal community. She believes personal experiences and the subconscious are inevitably intertwined in an artist's work, serving as a powerful source of motivation. The second interview, conducted via Google Meet with muralist Anpu Varkey, offered a contrasting perspective. Varkey stated that while her commitment to art was solidified working out of an artist collective in Germany, her work is primarily influenced by the personal history of the location she is painting in. She immerses herself in the local environment, drawing inspiration from the people and stories of the streets to create a connection with viewers. For Varkey, the act of creating large-scale public art is also a powerful statement, particularly as a woman occupying public spaces for her craft.

RESEARCH WORK BY ISHITA ARYA

Breaking the Page: E. E. Cummings and the Global Legacy of Experimental Poetry examines how Cummings reshaped poetry by breaking away from traditional rules of grammar, form, and structure. His style, influenced by war, personal philosophy, and modernist art movements like Cubism and Dadaism, transformed poetry into a space where visual design and emotional expression merged. The article highlights his innovative techniques, use of white space, invented words, and the lowercase “i” — which set him apart from contemporaries like Eliot and Pound. While critics once dismissed his work as gimmicky, his experiments proved deeply human, making poetry more intimate, playful, and emotionally resonant. Cummings’ influence extended globally, inspiring Beat poets, Concrete poets, songwriters like Bob Dylan, filmmakers, and even today’s Instagram poets and spoken-word artists. His legacy lies in granting permission to future generations to experiment, embrace freedom, and use poetry as a medium of authentic expression. Ultimately, Cummings was more than a poet, he was a rebel who turned language into both play and protest, leaving a lasting mark on global literature and visual poetics.

To deepen this exploration of arts and experimentation, two interviews were conducted with contemporary practitioners working in distinct but resonant fields

The two interviews conducted for this project with Dr. Naval Pant, founder of PYSSUM, and artist Richa Kashelkar reveal how experimentation, empathy, and authenticity shape creative and social practice in very different yet complementary ways.

Dr. Pant’s journey reflects how personal struggle can evolve into collective responsibility. From overcoming academic and language challenges in his own education to discovering the world of children with special needs, his life has been a story of empathy in action. Rooted in Paramahansa Yogananda’s teachings, he established PYSSUM in Lucknow as a space where compassion, music, and holistic development could thrive beyond rigid academic definitions of success. His activism and writing, particularly his book *An Unplanned Journey*, document not only his experiences but also the larger gaps in Indian society’s understanding of intellectual and developmental disabilities.

For him, writing and activism are inseparable, both driven by the conviction that inclusion must become a shared societal duty rather than the burden of a few.

Richa Kashelkar's perspective offers a contrasting but equally powerful insight into the role of personal history in creativity. Trained as an architect but committed fully to painting, she describes her art as emerging from an "innermost source" where memory, beauty, and cultural environments converge. For Kashelkar, experimentation is not an artistic choice but an essential condition of art itself without it, creation becomes decorative rather than meaningful. Influenced by the rhythms of everyday life in Goa, she captures domestic intimacy and natural landscapes as sites of quiet cultural resonance. Rejecting the pressures of social media, she insists on painting only what excites her, resisting external validation and reminding viewers that art is not the preserve of elites but a shared human language accessible to anyone open to it.

RESEARCH WORK BY KANISHKA JINDAL

As part of the wider research initiative *Arts and Experimentations*, two major articles were produced that together explored the intersections of history, culture, and artistic innovation. The first, *The Temple as Text: An Experimental Map of Patronage, Piety, and Personal History*, examined the Gopinath Jor-Bangla temple of Bengal as a multi-layered site of meaning where social ambition, devotional practice, and artistic experimentation intersect. Drawing on Dr. Mrinmoyee Ray's pioneering documentation of Bengal's brick temples, the article argued that monuments function not only as architectural forms but as cultural texts that embody the aspirations of patrons, the creativity of artisans, and the shared memory of communities. The second article, *The Tapestry of Experimentation: Tracing Spanish Art and Culture's Avant-Garde Spirit*, turned to Europe, situating Spain's artistic legacy within a broader avant-garde tradition. From the prehistoric cave paintings of Altamira to the radical innovations of Modernisme, Cubism, and Surrealism, the research traced how Spanish artists consistently used experimentation as both aesthetic rebellion and cultural dialogue. It also highlighted the resilience of this spirit under Franco's dictatorship, when abstraction and interdisciplinary exchange became subtle yet powerful acts of resistance. Taken together, these articles demonstrated that whether through terracotta temples in Bengal or modernist movements in Spain, art serves as an evolving map of personal history, cultural identity, and collective experimentation.

The interview component further deepened these insights by situating contemporary creative voices within this broader dialogue of experimentation and history. Conducted via email, the first interview with experimental writer Mary Caponegro highlighted how her use of fragmentation, metafiction, and "crafted clutter" resists conventional narrative closure while reframing domesticity and gender roles through feminist poetics. A call interview with Dr. Mrinmoyee Ray elaborated on her temple research, emphasizing that temples should be studied not only as architectural structures but as interdisciplinary texts that encode trade, devotion, and social hierarchies. And lastly, an email interview with Spanish painter Alejandro Casanova revealed a different facet of experimentation, as he described the tension between precision and spontaneity in his use of oil and watercolor, where bodies, light, and silence become spaces of quiet resistance. Together, these insights echoed and expanded the findings of the research articles: art is never static but always a negotiation between tradition and innovation, between

individual memory and collective history. By placing academic study in dialogue with lived creative practice, the project underscored how experimentation—whether through words, clay, or paint—remains central to reimagining the cultural narratives that shape human experience.

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RESEARCH WORK BY ARMAN KUMAR

Under the scope of the research titled “*Arts and Experimentations: Mapping Personal Histories Across Socio-Cultural Poetics*”, two articles have been produced. The academic article, “*Seventeen Syllables: Haiku Across Time and Trauma*,” that followed how the poetic form haiku shifted from its ancient Japanese roots in nature to a worldwide means of communicating modern, political thoughts, is one. It talks about how haiku was traditionally known for its serene concentration on nature, frequently adhering to a strict 5-7-5 syllable structure and seasonal words (kigo). The study is focused on the postwar Gendai haiku movement (“Contemporary haiku”) and demonstrated how poets like Kaneko Tohta and Ban'ya Natsuishi deliberately discarded these conventions. They abandoned the strict 5-7-5 formula and references to seasons to reflect the destruction and transformation of the post-war world. This transition made haiku a vociferous, strong “protest scream,” an instrument to convey intense trauma, grief, and social issues in fragmented, broken-up language. The article believes that it was not an effort to weaken the tradition, but rather to strengthen it and make it flexible enough for the short, three-line form to work on key global issues, such as colonialism, war, and climate concerns.

In order to offer grounded insight on modern literary experimentation, the researcher interviewed poet and author Dr. Amit Ranjan. During the interview, they discussed Dr. Ranjan's philosophy of writing, that he describes as employing “the old form for new ideas” as opposed to experimentation with form per se. He noted the highly autobiographical nature of poetry, with life, facts and “fictions we live with,” spilling over into the work. In addition, the interview brought out Dr. Ranjan's unorthodox method of writing non-fiction, especially his history texts, which he writes with an imaginative, novel-like style, defying conventional academic writing practices. The findings that were collected gave insight into how cosmopolitan identity,

institutional history (like that of St. Stephen's, JNU, and FIU), and personal history inform a writer's style and potential future thematic directions. Dr. Ranjan also mentions a possible shift to speculative fiction, complete fiction in contrast with his current writings, to meet the chaos of contemporary life and the arrival of AI.

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