

Industrial Design Centre

Indian Institute of technology

Tagore and Nature: Sculptural Exploration with Terracotta

Design Research Seminar

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Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where other's ideas or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the original sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

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Approval

The design research seminar project titled "Tagore and Nature: Sculptural Exploration with Terracotta" by Shyam Sundar Chatterjee is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirement for M.Des degree programme in animation and film design.

Guide: 

Acknowledgement

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Abstract

We all human beings are synthesis of a great phenomenon of the physical world which we refer as nature and to life in general. Being a part of the nature we all human beings in some way or the other prone to experience the phenomena of the nature for sure. Every day while experiencing the nature around us we also reflects our own emotions towards the physical world. Then with a creative aspect of our mind we try to materialize our feelings and emotions through some medium. In this project I have tried to study Rabindranath Tagore's reflection of nature through his poetry and various art work by exploring few terracotta sculptures of the artist itself. This was accompanied by a study of some works of Tagore to understand how nature shaped the poet and the painter. Rabindranath Tagore's decision to move from Calcutta to Bolpur, Shantiniketan suggests the close affinity he felt with nature. He has done a tremendous amount of art work be it poetry, paintings, stories etc. which were clearly inspired from a living contact with the nature. You can say Rabindranath Tagore is synonym to nature itself and in the field of art both are inseparable. The exploration included attempts at both realistic and stylized interpretations in terracotta.

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Rabindranath Tagore and Nature

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7th May 1861 in the Jorasanko Mansion in Kolkata, West Bengal. He was a polymath who reshaped Indian art and literature with a modernist sensibility rooted in the Indian context in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He wrote " Gitanjali" in profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse. Tagore became the first non-European to the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. His poetry is majorly regarded as spiritual and mercurial. As an exponent of the Bengal Renaissance, he advanced a vast canon that comprised paintings, sketches and doodles, hundreds of texts, and some two thousand songs; his legacy endures also in the institution he founded, Visva-Bharati University.

He was also the leader of the Brahmo Samaj, which was a new religious sect in nineteenth-century Bengal and which attempted a revival of the ultimate monistic basis of Hinduism as laid down in the Upanishads. He was educated at home, and although at seventeen he was sent to England for formal schooling, he did not finish his studies there. In his mature years, in addition to his many-sided literary activities, he managed the family estates, a project which brought him into close touch with common humanity and increased his interest in social reforms. He also started an experimental school at Shantiniketan where he tried his Upanishadic ideals of education. From time to time he participated in the Indian nationalist movement, though in his own non-sentimental and visionary way; and Gandhi, the political father of modern India, was his devoted friend. Tagore was knighted by the ruling British Government in 1915, but within a few years he returned the honour as a protest against British policies in India.

Tagore had early success as a writer in his native Bengal. With his translations of some of his poems he became rapidly known in the West. In fact his fame attained a luminous height, taking him across continents

on lecture tours and tours of friendship. For the world he became the voice of India's spiritual heritage, and for India, especially for Bengal, he became a great living institution.

Although Tagore wrote successfully in all literary genres, he was first of all a poet. Among his fifty and odd volumes of poetry are Manasi-(1890), Sonar Tari-(1894), Gitanjali-(1910), Gitimalya-(1914), and Balaka-(1916). The English renderings of his poetry, which include The Gardener-(1913), Fruit-Gathering-(1916), and The Fugitive-(1921), do not generally correspond to particular volumes in the original Bengali, and in spite of its title, Gitanjali, the most acclaimed of them, contains poems from other works besides its namesake. Tagore's major plays are Raja-(1910), Dakghar-(1912), Achalayatan-(1912), Muktadhara-(1922) and Raktakaravi-(1926). He is the author of several volumes of short stories and a number of novels, among them Gora, Ghare-Biare, and Yogayog. Besides these, he wrote musical dramas, essays of all types, travel diaries, and two autobiographies, one in his middle years and the other shortly before his death in 1941. Tagore also left numerous drawings and paintings, and songs for which he wrote the music for himself.

Tagore's poetry gleams with attributes of simplicity, mysticism and romanticism, which find expression through an abundance of rich imagery and symbolism from nature. His poems are often moving depictions of Indian landscapes particularly from Bengal. Many of his symbols allude to the Indian mythology, scriptures and traditions. He often merges the external scenery with his internal feelings and thoughts, often personifying the natural motifs with his own characteristic elucidation on of Vedantic conception of unity of human and nature. In Tagore's eyes nothing was trivial or insignificant and each nuance of everyday life attained in his poetry eternal significance. Much of the notions of romanticism in Tagore's writings elevates the trivial to the eternal.

Tagore's poetry sometimes imitates the style of Kalidasa, revealing different facets of natural beauty in all its splendor. The varying moods of nature are recorded in his poetry, as noted by Dr. Radhakrisnan, "Tagore uses the visible world as a means of shadowing forth the invisible and thus touching the temporal with the light of

the eternal. To Tagore the world of nature is not an illusion but is rather a medium for accomplishing the indivisibility with the infinite". Nature which is a medium of spiritual communion is for Tagore the manifestation of God. Tagore's mysticism finds expression through images and symbols.

Rabindranath Tagore died on 7th of August, 1941.

Sculptural Exploration with Terracotta

While I was doing a subtle exploration of Tagore's art work, my mind was incubating with different types of thoughts, through which I was trying to fulfill the gap between the impact of Tagore's art work in my mind and how I reflect the essence of Tagore's attitude by creating the master's terracotta figures. Eventually I dared to take the first step towards creating his sculptural figures with little bit of hesitation. During the process of creating the entire sculptural figure with terracotta, I came across various types of experiences. The major experience I had while I was creating all the sculptures, was a feeling of being God who is creating the human figures, but felt disappointed while I fail to give life to all them. But I am still happy with my lifeless babies. Hopefully the experiences would help me to make better art work in the near future.

Standing Figure of Rabindranath Tagore in Terracotta-1

This is the first work I started by creating a one foot terracotta sculpture of Tagore standing in a contemplative frame of mind. In this model first I made a metal armature fixed on a wooden base, then applied clay layer after layer until I got the desired shape in an open three dimensional space. Later on the model started cracking while it was drying. Then I fulfilled all the cracks with clay over the model and polish it with thin syrup of clay and fine tuned the detailings.



Standing Figure of Rabindranath Tagore in Terracotta-1



Standing Figure of Rabindranath Tagore in Terracotta-1

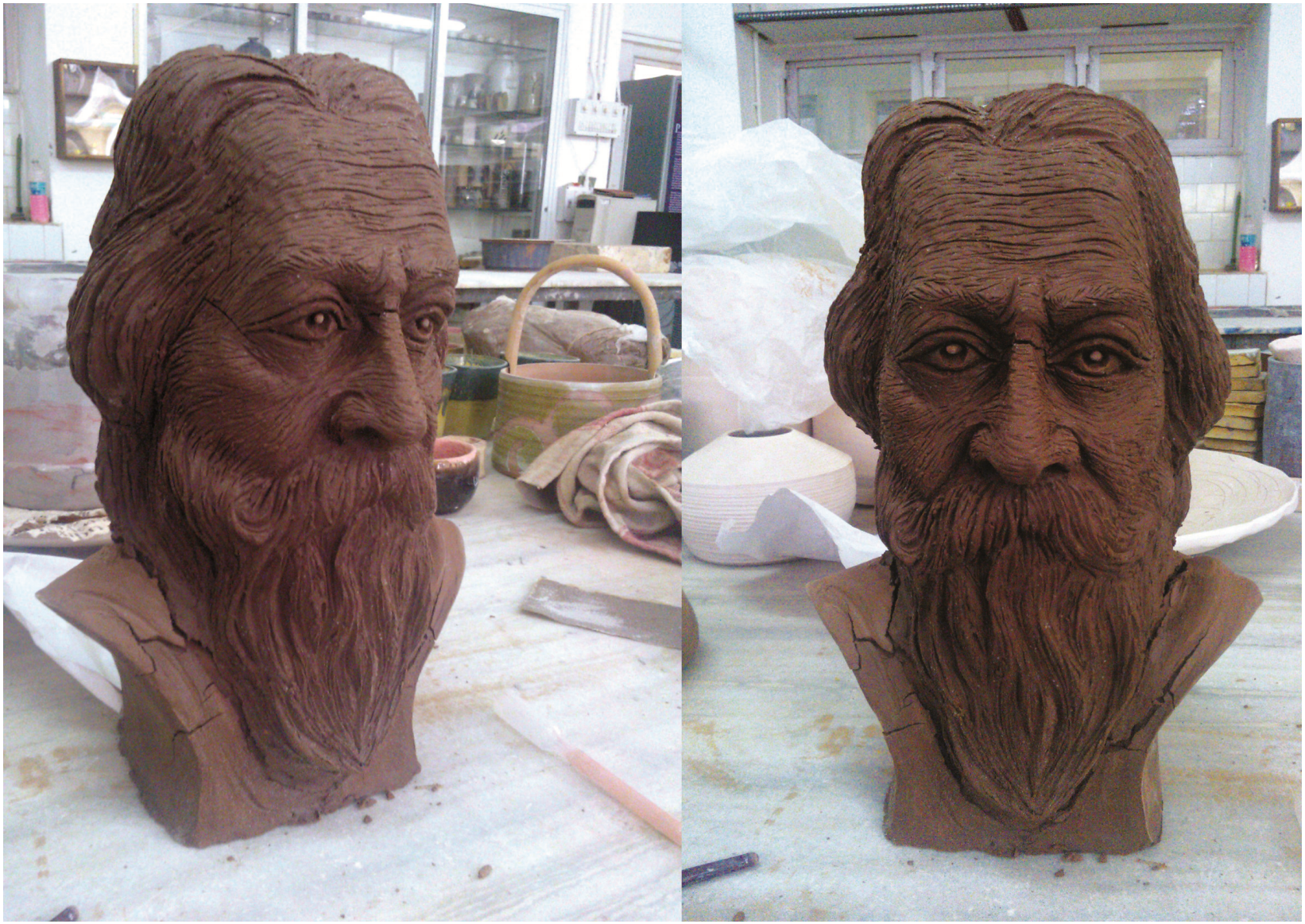


Bust of Rabindranath Tagore

The second work was a bust of Tagore of 11’ inch to 12’ inch in height. The reason I have created this bust was to capture the internal emotions of the artist and also to feel each and every feature of his face. I started creating this model without any armature. I took the initiative with just a lump of clay and then modeling out the figure by adding layer after layer. In this model I have imprinted a texture which is influenced from trees on the whole surface of the bust.



Bust of Rabindranath Tagore



Bust of Rabindranath Tagore





Abstract Sculptural exploration of Rabindranath Tagore

This was the third sculpture of Tagore of one and half foot in height. In the continuing series of making realist figures of Tagore, I felt like to bit divert towards an abstract exploration. The idea behind exploring this abstract form was a clear intuition. I started this model with paper armature and then applied layers of clay on top of it.



Abstract Sculpture of Rabindranath Tagore



Abstract Sculpture of Rabindranath Tagore



Offspring Synthesis of Human Being and Nature

This was the fourth sculpture in a row in terracotta. Again the idea behind creating this model was partly intuitive and an impact of Tagore's writings on offspring's in my mind. Even this model also does not carry any armature inside it. I started modeling this figure directly with clay and then added up layers of clay. Particular this model needed a special detailing and a very sensitive hand, because it was a very challenging task for me to bring out the softness of a new born bay and the soft curves of a snail.



Offspring Synthesis of Human Being and Nature



Offspring Synthesis of Human Being and Nature



Standing Figure of Rabindranath Tagore in Terracotta-2

I started my fifth work by building up a three foot terracotta sculpture of Tagore again standing in a contemplative frame of mind. In this model first I made a wooden armature fixed on a wooden base, then built the mass of the anatomy with paper and applied clay on top of the paper surface. But because of the paper mass inside the model, the model started sinking which results bigger cracks. Later on I fulfilled all the cracks with clay. I made this model with a rough texture all over the surface rather than a fine polished surface. And it was a nice experience of making a bigger sculpture indeed.

Standing Figure of Rabindranath Tagore in Terracotta-2



Standing Figure of Rabindranath Tagore in Terracotta-2



Standing Figure of Rabindranath Tagore in Terracotta-2





Conclusion

I was not sure about my artistic capabilities of sculpting these models. But with support from my guide I would took the initiative of deliberate model making in terracotta. As I started giving shape to the lumps of clay, it gradually starts taking shape of figures I had visualized in an open space. Sometime it becomes difficult to control the material to define a shape in a space. But with persistence the creation takes place under the hand, no matter how hard the material tries to get slipped out of my fingers.

Throughout the process of making the sculptures, a relationship has been developed with the models. I started developing an attachment towards the models through a bridge of feelings and emotions which were out bursting from both the sculptures as well as from me. Also while I was exploring Rabindranath Tagore's art works I realized how nature could help in the upliftment of human creativity. So far it has been a nice experience and hope it would be much better if I would make sculptures in the near future under my guide Prof. Raja Mohanty.

Appendix

About Sculpture

Sculpture is a plastic art which is one of the branches of visual arts that operates in a three dimensional space. The purpose of creating sculptures has been centrally connected to many form of religious devotion in different cultures. Sculptures are built generally by using two types of process, one is carving another is modeling. Carving is the removing of material whereas modeling is adding up of material as clay. Various materials are use for sculpting like clay, metal, ceramics, wood etc. But contemporary sculptural process led to an almost complete freedom of materials and process. There are two types of basic sculpture exist, one is round sculptures which are free standing such as statues and the other type is relief, which are attached to some background space. There are some colossal sculptures on this world, one of them is the Chinese Spring Temple Buddha, size on record is 128mt (420ft) and another grand form of portrait sculpture is the equestrian statue of a rider on horse. Then there are some small forms of sculpture include the figurine, normally a statue that is no more than 18 inches tall, and for reliefs the plaquette, medal or coin.

History of Sculpture

The three-dimensional art begins with prehistoric sculptures. For thousands of years sculpture has filled many roles in human life. The earliest sculpture was probably made to supply magical help to hunters. After the dawn of civilization, statues were used to represent gods. Ancient kings, possibly in the hope of making themselves immortal, had likenesses carved, and portrait sculpture was born. The Greeks made statues that depicted perfectly formed men and women. Early Christians decorated churches with demons and devils, reminders of the presence of evil for the many churchgoers who could neither read nor write. From its beginnings until the present, sculpture has been largely monumental. Sculpture may be the oldest of the arts. People carved before they painted or designed dwellings. The earliest drawings were probably carved on rock or incised (scratched) in earth. Therefore, these drawings were as much forerunners of relief sculpture as of painting. From recent primitive sculpture and from the few surviving prehistoric pieces, we can judge that prehistoric sculpture was never made to be beautiful. It was always made to be used in rituals. In their constant fight for survival, early people made sculpture to provide spiritual support. The earliest known works of the Stone Age are *The Venus of Berekhat Ram* and *The Venus of Tan-Tan*, both primitive effigies dating to 230,000 BCE or earlier. Sculptures in the ancient civilization period of Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and China gradually developed forms of writing about 3000 B.C. The people of these civilizations, like their prehistoric ancestors, also expressed deeply felt beliefs in sculpture. Thereafter, sculptors have been active in all ancient civilizations, and all major art movements up to the present. After Egyptian Sculpture, the principal Golden Ages in the evolution of sculpture have been: (1) Classical Antiquity (500-27 BCE); (2) The Gothic Era (c.1150-1300); (3) The Italian Renaissance (c.1400-1600); and (4) Baroque Sculpture (1600-1700).

Contemporary Sculpture

The Three-Dimensional art of sculpture is no longer confined to traditional sculptural concepts, materials or methods of production. It is no longer exclusively representational but frequently wholly abstract. Nor it is purely solid and static, it may reference empty space in an important way, and can also be kinetic and capable of movement. Finally, as well as being carved or modelled, it can be assembled, glued, projected (holographic ally), or constructed in a wide variety of ways. As a result the traditional four-point meaning and definition of sculpture no longer applies. Modern and contemporary art have added a number of non-traditional forms of sculpture, including sound sculpture, light sculpture, environmental art, environmental sculpture, kinetic sculpture (involving aspects of physical motion), land art, and site-specific art. Sculpture is an important form of public art. A collection of sculpture in a garden setting can be called a sculpture garden.

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