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## The brush strokes and art forms of contemporary artist Jaspal Singh

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### Abstract

One of the inventive and insightful artists who have capability in contemporary techniques, developed taste in Surrealistic concepts by concentrating on new and cheerful colours to fashion imageries and fantasy-like sights on the canvas. He nurtured his search for novel methods of automatism and the spirit of spontaneity.

**Keywords:** Contemporary, aesthetics, composition, geometric expressions

### Introduction

Jaspal Singh's initial works were in three dimensions, which were inclined by the impetus of his art teacher in school which bears imprint till now. Apart from art, he has displayed intense attentiveness to photography, archaeology, heritage and Astrophysics. He integrates contemporary subject substance, explicitly geometrical forms from nature, and flat colours and lines. The colours nevertheless even, are very refined and their dissemination is unique in his works. He spontaneously uses strokes while outlining the geometrical form that provides waywardness, forte and mysterious charm to the composition. Among modern painters, Jaspal Singh's work creates a new surge of aesthetics by employing an infinitesimal colour scheme. His works are certainly a resurgence of regular elements in a new manner. Thus, the stimulus itself concludes a full circle over fifty years whose aftermaths are visible through comprehensive expressions, accumulating in dividuality into the body of contemporary art.

Jaspal Singh (Plate No.1) was born in February 1960, in the Jalandhar district of Punjab. He remained with his father Subedar Naurang Singh who joined the British army and fought against Nazis during the Second world war and was bestowed with many war stars and gallantry medals. His Mother Mrs Harbans Kaur was a homemaker. He grew up along with his four brothers and sisters. He nurtured a taste for painting at the tender age of eight. His parents continually treasured his love for art and allowed him to pursue his career as an artist. Currently, he is living with his better half Gurmeet Geetan at Tibba Sahib, a street Hoshiarpur district of Punjab.

He received his formal training in painting from Punjab University Chandigarh where he studied MA in Fine Arts and M.A History of Art and stood first. He accomplished his research work at Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar On the Kushana Art of Sanghol". Throughout his student days at Punjab University Chandigarh, he was predisposed towards the works of Shri C.L Sharma S. Ajit Singh Jabaal, and Malkeet Singh who were countless causes of reassurance and guidance<sup>[1]</sup>.

These methods of functioning later linked the young artist to work hard and became a persuasive, contemporary artist over a period. He was stirred by European painters Van Gogh, Michelangelo, Salvador Dali, and Indian front bearers Nandlal Bose, Rabindra Nath Tagore etc. Jaspal Singh's paintings are largely gyrated around geometrical landscapes.

He abstractly painted landscapes, which were regarded as communicative in totality. He also incorporated elements of Indian art and other things related to social setup that would make his work further imposing and significant. He initiated his career in the department of Fine Arts at the Government College for Women, Rohtak, Haryana State in 1983, then worked as Adhoc Lecturer in the same year at, GCW Patiala, he joined regular service in fine Arts subject sat the Government College for Women, Patiala in 1987, but later on, he was transferred to Government College Hoshiarpur at the end of the year 1999 and is still working there.

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He was of the view point that his compositions represent true love for nature. All his forms have been inspired by nature<sup>[2]</sup>.

The artist has used realistic and objective imagery to produce three-dimensional figures that are supplementary and primarily based on fine detailing of figures resembling trees, rocks, mountains and humans. The work is illustrative in nature. There is a simple sense of variability in his images. He has used scuttle shading and bright colours to bring profundity to his canvases. In his works, colour forms, symbols and abstract signs are used to construct a multiplier effect. He has used bright oil and acrylic paints to indicate distinctiveness in his paintings.

He has contributed to many solo and group shows few important ones are such as Triveni Kala Sangam New Delhi, Kala Gram, North Zone Cultural Centre, Chandigarh, Shantiniketan (West Bengal), Kurukshetra University (Haryana), SONG OF IMAGES, a group show of Indo American Artist, Indian Academy of Fine Arts, Amritsar, Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi many times, All India level group shows, Tavern Hall, Gaiety. Theatre Art Gallery, Shimla, The Art Rays Contemporary Artist from India Art show, Nehru Centre (Indian High Commission) 8, South Audley St London and many more. The resourceful artist's popularity and know-how can be well judged through many awards, like the University Medal, Punjab University Chandigarh, Roll of Honour, Government College Hoshiarpur (Punjab), Jawahar Lal Nehru Memorial fund Award, New Delhi, Silver Jubilee Award & Kala Rattan (Honour), SG Thakur Singh Memorial Medal and Award, Indian Academy of Fine Arts Amritsar Honorable Mention Award, Punjab Lalit Kala Akademi, Chandigarh, Punjab Art Heritage award Jalandhar, Merit award Indian Society of Oriental Arts, Calcutta, Award of Honour, Baba Farid Society, Faridkot, 79<sup>th</sup> All Indian Art exhibition Award, Indian Academy of Fine Arts Amritsar and many more awards.

His works are exhibited at numerous venues like Art studio, fine Arts faculty, Government College for Women, Patiala, State Museum Shimla, Soviet Cultural Centre, Chennai, Environment Society of Patiala, Patiala 50 Armed Core, Patiala, Bharat Bhawan, Bhopal, Lalit Kala Parishad, Vishakhapatnam, Punjab Art Heritage, Jalandhar, photographs National Lalit Kala Akademi Archive's New Delhi and many other renowned places. He vigorously participated in educational works like seminars and educational lectures. The information regarding his diversified work could be gathered from the Artist Directory, National Lalit Kala Academy, New Delhi, Biography International, Reference India, WHO'S. WHO in India, his works have found their expression through a Documentary film titled "Jaspal and his Art" prepared and compiled by Doordarshan Jalandhar (Television) for Punjabi National hook-up. He is also an expert in conducting interviews of great artists of Punjab on YouTube channels of Lalit Kala Akademi, Chandigarh. Recently he participated in an international artist camp, Artist Guide at Ajitgarh, Mohali in January 2023, and also participated in the Adivasi Mask painting show of the Speaking Art Foundation of Gurugram in 2023.

His works display a great enlargement in terms of resources as well as content. His work portrays imposing ecological niceties in his compositions, which were highlighted in attractive colour schemes. The artist used shadows effect

along with contrasting colours, which provide countless depth to the artwork. His works can be inferred in several ways, as it seems there are interactive arrangements that are built into these compositions. The prerequisite tools he uses are geometrical forms, human forms, birds, still life etc. At times, his abstract work's subject matter is constrained by nuances and the history behind them. His works often contain essentials drawn from principles of Spirituality, which gives his compositions greater depth and sets them apart from the work of other contemporary artists. We always found him experimenting with modernist styles without upsetting their traditional form<sup>[3]</sup>.

His work identification marker is Geometric expressions, which have remained constant throughout his career. His works are an engagement with nature and the landscape in totality. His reputation as an artist often is noticed due to the interplay of his colours, which he developed in various rich combinations. Broadly, Speaking, he adheres to Avant grade style using Post-impressionism, Cubism, or Expressionism work by adding up with Indian subject matter.

He saw the paintings of Van Gogh, Michelangelo, and Salvador Dali and began to use colours as a tool of Construction, switching from water colours to more tactile acrylic colours or vice versa. The essentials of his masterpiece include shapes, lines, colours, tones and textures that produce ambiances in volume, space, movement, and light on flat surfaces. These elements are pooled into expressive compositional patterns to describe real or supernatural phenomena or to create wholly abstract visual relationships.

His works draw stimulus from the artist's childhood recollections of growing up in places close to nature and endowed with rich flora and fauna, the artist employed symbolic forms to give expression to the surrounding atmosphere. He has smartly used the source of space, time and consciousness in his paintings. The artist uses mediums, such as acrylic, water colour and other water-based paints, ink, and gouache on a variety of modern forms, to enhance artistic expressiveness and add sensuality to the works. Expressions were given shape by using geometrical forms like circles, Squares, rectangles, ovals, and triangles. The forms give perfection to the composition by adding sleeping lines, Standing lines, slanting lines etc. as desirable. These forms are sometimes repeatedly seen in his paintings to create balance and harmony. The choice of medium and the form, as well as the artist's techniques, help in providing uniqueness to the visual image. His paintings are often titled such as Fire and Mask; Let Me Play, In Between, Dreams etc.

Painting "Imprint" size 8"X10" is a collage done with paper. (Plate No.2) In such works, the list of which could be much longer, exhibit maturity in style, which recurs constantly. The forms tend to be delineated have flowing patterns and heavy curves with few interior details. The colorful cutting of paper is laid on large, thin, luminous, carefully calculated patches. The shadows are practically shown and the illustrated pace is either extremely shallow or warped into a flatness. This smoothness parallels the plane of the paper and defies academic rules based on perspective and foreshortening. The total effect, hence becomes too intense. He employs a strategy of freehand to create decorative elements whose imprints could be seen in patterns exhibited in the rugs, textiles, and ceramics. The choice and treatment of subject matter imply optimism, hedonism, intelligence,

and sensuality. Owing to these salient features, his masterpieces deserve popularity.

Painting "Fire n Mask" size 24"x30" is done in Acrylic colours on canvas. (PlateNo.3) Here properties are negligible or minimal displaying the same geometrical characteristics such as circle, triangle, semi-circle etc. Two parts of the mask have a ground colour and are completed with bold brush strokes. The finishing is generally delimited to details such as the mask facial features, tree in the Centre, bird on top and a few balls in the ground. There is no colour gradation apart from the red line accompanying the back line forming a transitional 'Modelling' line. As one notices in the toys especially the mask characteristic of primitive art, the back is often ignored.

The heads in the background are comparatively large and special attention is paid to the large eyes. It was very different from the idiosyncratic and delicate art but nevertheless was recognised to be a lively and living art. Some traces of small leafy pates are seen in the background on the extreme left, using similar flat spaces and strong finishing lines. Jaspal Singh's work however is not limited to creation but treats his objects with a power and freedom beyond the reach of the genuine modern artist. He uses the style for a particular function, i.e., the decoration of his objects in a simple and minimalistic manner, where it is essentially a kind of art addressed to the masses. He uses bright colours and paints the pictures in a vigorous and spontaneous style. The colours mostly used are cadmium yellow, ultramarine blue, lemon yellow, brown, scarlet red etc. He is one of the modern Punjabi artists to consciously model his work entirely on modern and contemporary techniques.

Painting "Monolog" size 30"x40" has been done in acrylic on canvas. (Plate No.4) In this composition, the monologue is the centre of attraction as he is communicating with himself for a long period. His sweeping brush strokes model a figure's head which is probably the artist himself over an area with a blue background. The small circles, geometrical-shaped triangles, and ovals in the centre filled the page and tended to display the frame shadows, which are the centre of attraction. Jaspal Singh's palette in this painting was very limited and austere. Details were confined, to the shadows and objects, which worked as highlights. There is no background environment. The subjects included modernized and contemporary themes. His art is very decorative; the stylized elements are handsome and somewhat emotional. He emphasized lines and their pattern, some of the designs of this kind have given more liveliness to his work. His paintings have a greater spaciousness, though they still have a 'spread out' quality. The artist represented the tentative definition of surrealism as a certain psychic automatism that corresponds rather closely to the state of dreaming. The objects of the artist are remarkable as they represent the systematization of ideas, which are drawn from surrealism. The textures are produced with patches of colours in the background with light yellow colour. On the left side of the composition, dark night is shown in darker shades of black and blue. The image seems to appear from the flat background giving a 3D effect with the formation of shadows.

The painting "Between Ice Cream and Moon" size is 8"x10" and is done in water colours on a sheet. (PlateNo.5) There is no doubt that Jaspal Singh's work did call attention to geometric forms as a source, though his influence in modern

art has been immense. However, geometric elements, that are seen in the work, may be attributed to the rediscovery of modern art itself rather than to what Jaspal Singh did with them. The subject matter of his pictures is the exotic landscape, the lush circles, the flora and fauna, the orange moon of this land and the tempting ice cream in the front. He aesthetically breaks new ground by introducing arbitrary colours and art nouveau patterns. The lines on the surface of the paintings make forms and shapes with an overbearing rhythm of their own. The lines are reiterated and reinforced with subsidiary lines and colours, this feature of repetition is a strong characteristic of his work. The colours are bright and darker at the back which represents night. The balls, which are shown coming from the top of the composition on the left, represent life. The texture of bright light is revealed beneath the tree. The purified idea created a better understanding between the artist and the viewers. The images complement each other and give more clarity to the subject. The light seems to be coming from the right side of the composition that seems to be consciously formed. Here art and science are inter-mingled to yield the idea of creativity. The composition is overloaded with abstraction. The colours of the ice cream and the inner part of the foliage are the same and the surfaces on which they rest are of different colour.

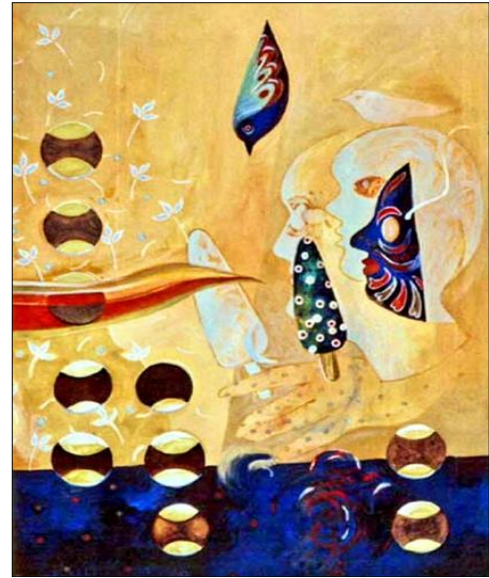
Painting "Landscape" size 22"x30" done in water colours (Plate No.6), illustrates natural scenery such as mountains, valleys, trees, and river depicts a wide view. The elements are organised into a coherent composition. The composition seems to be copied from reality with varied degrees of accuracy. These beautiful scenes of nature surrounded him and always attracted him. The painting captures perspective by the use of vibrant colours and textures of nature. This provides artists with an infinite palette of ideas to play with. The artist here tried to transport the viewers to another time and place and let them see the world through their eyes. He has done a stylistic interpretation of nature by using very sophisticated colours and their distribution and position are unique. He freely used shades of green that created waywardness, strength and exotic charm. Among modern painters, Jaspal Singh's work creates a new aesthetic form by using very limited expressions. There is no reference to the source but a rebirth of its elements is a new way of framing his thoughts into a piece of art.

One of his compositions is a graphic print of size 8"x10" that evolved around his style of expression (Plate No 7). He has shown the trend towards abstraction and the contemporary preoccupation with textures. It is paradoxically a part of the revival though a reaction to the modern art in Punjab. A decorative phase is dispersed and adulterated, and survives only as a memory that has been suitably resolved into modern art. This piece of art is a collective expression of an artist with the help of a bright colour scheme. The colours used are red, yellow, black and green. The artist uses geometrical shapes like ovals, circles, triangles and rectangles. The tenderness and strength of this style appealed to him and he worked on this style of his own, adapting the qualities of graphic art. The colours are opaque and flat and are enclosed within strong black lines. Dots and decorations in white finish the picture. The enclosure of the bright spaces in thick black lines gives the colour areas an added luminosity like that of stained glass. Often figures like birds, trees, stones, leaves, trees, and swords are depicted and arranged symmetrically on the

lower side of a tree, which is the centre of attraction. The whole arrangement is highly stylized decorative, and meaningful. Exceptional pictures show a single figure of a bird on top of the tree set in a plain background.



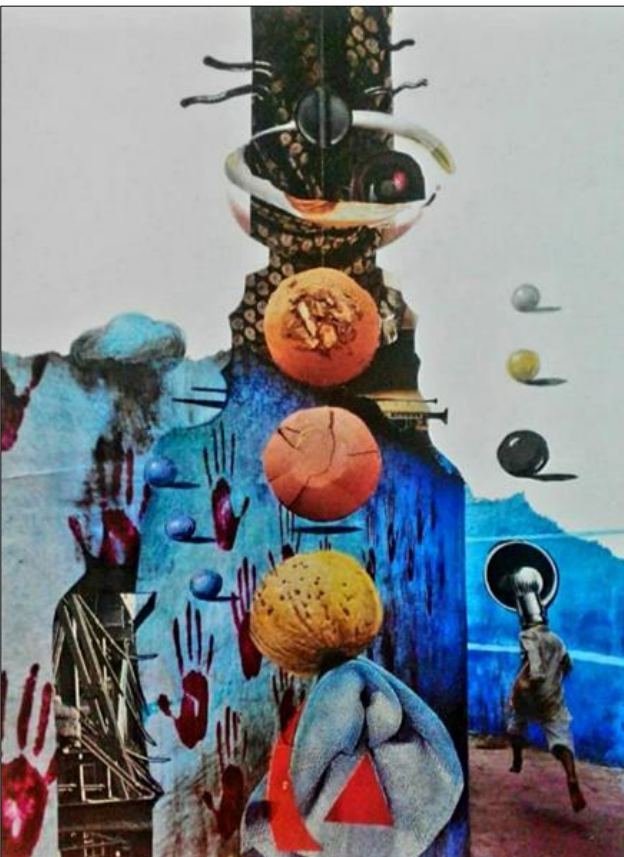
**Plate 1:** Artist Jaspal Singh



**Plate 3:** 24 x 30 inches, Acrylic colors



**Plate 4:** Monolog, 30 x 40 inches Acrylic colors



**Plate 2:** Imprint... 8 x 10 inches, paper Collage



**Plate 5:** Between ice cream and moon 8 x 10 inches, watercolour



**Plate 6:** Landscape in water colour



**Plate 7:** Graphic Print 8 x 10" Slide no. 6

### Conclusion

The artist has used realistic and neutral images to create three-dimensional figures, which are essentially based on fine detailing of figures like trees, rocks, mountains and humans. The work is symbolic. There is a simple sense of changeability in his images. He has used subtle shading and bright colours to bring depth to his canvases. In his work colour, forms, symbols and abstract signs are used to generate a multiple effect. He has used bright oil and acrylic paints to show mystiqueness in his paintings.

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