



Research Paper

## HIRAETH on Canvas

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**ABSTRACT:** Tangled twines of Spiritualism and Art will be discussed. The expression of spiritual or mystical themes, concepts, and experiences via the arts is referred to as Spiritualism in Art. It includes a broad spectrum of historical artistic movements, genres, and methodologies that aim to delve into the transcendent, metaphysical, or interior facets of human existence. Artists have used spirituality as a source of inspiration and a way to connect with something that exists outside of the physical world throughout many historical times. There are many different types of spiritualism in art, such as in painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, music, and performance art. One of the first examples of spiritualism in art may be found in the Indian civilization of antiquity, where depictions of mythology and religious beliefs were common. Gods, goddesses, and religious ceremonies were depicted in these works of art to transmit spiritual ideas and investigate the relationship between people and the divine. Spiritual topics are still explored in contemporary art, frequently in novel and unusual ways. To explore issues of identity, meaning, and the human condition, artists today draw from a wide range of spiritual and philosophical traditions as well as personal experiences. In conclusion, spiritualism in art refers to the historical exploration of mystical and spiritual topics in a variety of artistic genres. It expresses humanity's ongoing quest for transcendence, purpose, and ties to the supernatural or otherworldly planes of existence.

**KEYWORDS:** Spiritualist art, sacred art, mediumistic painting, mysticism, intuition

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### I. Introduction

Spiritualism was a nineteenth-century social religious movement which held that an individual's awareness survives death and can be accessed by the living. Spiritualists regard the afterlife, or "spirit world," as a dynamic environment in which spirits continue to evolve. They believe that spirits can provide beneficial insight into moral and ethical difficulties, as well as the essence of God, as contact with spirits is feasible and that spirits are more advanced than humans. Spiritualists consider the spirits of the deceased to be "discarnate humans" which are believed to be capable of communication. Those who can communicate with spirits are known as mediums (although anyone can become one with study and practice). Therefore, a lot of believers talk of "spirit guides"—certain spirits who are frequently consulted and trusted for both worldly and spiritual assistance. They hold that the afterlife is not a static state, but rather one in which spirits evolve. They think that spirits are capable of growth and perfection, moving through higher spheres or levels and can impart information on religious and philosophical matters, as well as on God and the afterlife.

#### Spiritualist Art

Spiritualist art, also known as spirit art, mediumistic art, or psychic painting, is a type of art influenced by spiritualism. Themes of connectivity, interdependence, unity, the divine in form, infinity and the eternal, hidden patterns of completeness, the Self, shifts in awareness, and so on frequently define spiritual experience and, as a result, inspire and influence the artistic drive.

It can be an artwork in the presence of another. Concentrating on a real person, possibly the person who requested the work, may cause your spiritual or intuitive receptors to pick up pictures that serve as inspiration for the piece of art. It can be a carving, sculpture, or portrait of the person you see when conducting a mediumship reading. It could be connected to their past selves.

### Types of Spiritual Art

**Automated Drawing-** Artwork that is physically medium but in which the medium serves as a conduit through which spirit communicates. Spirit directs the movements of the hands in such artwork.

**Auragraph-**This art form employs a variety of energy information, such as reading a person's aura (their body's energy pathway, which frequently represents the colors around the body) and using imagery and symbols found in intuitive and psychic processes that employ illustrative representations of a person's life and spiritual path.

**Spirit Portrait-** The images you see when acting as a medium for a family member or possibly a spirit guide would convey a spirit portrait.

**Intuitive Art-** The process of making art using an inner awareness that is heart-centered and does not rely on analysis or questions with rationale answers is known as intuitive art. While creating the piece, the artwork emerges without any prior planning. The process of intuitive art is a spiritually based, interconnected one that lets the art take the lead as it develops through layers of paint and various other media. It enables the use of multiple paint layers for art that is free from judgment. It's a method of making that involves tuning into your feelings and acting on what feels right.

**Intuitive Energy Art-**The ability to allow the art to happen and allow inspiration to guide you through the process, which goes hand in hand with allowing in messages in your spiritual practice, can be developed through intuitive energy art. Instead of having a conclusion and recreating it on canvas, it is an art form that leads to a conclusion. It is impacted by the feedback you get from other people and the artwork that results from that. It is an assessment of your well-being, or what factors lead to your current state.

**Clair Art-** It is making art using your clairs (clairaudience, clairvoyance, claircognizance, etc.). This type of art uses evidence as a means of expressing to your client or audience what you are seeing in your head.

It is an art form that leads to a conclusion rather than having a conclusion and reproducing it on canvas.

**Inspired Spiritual Art-** This artwork is influenced by your spiritual encounters, such as meditative visions and the sensation of spiritual rebirth expressed through art or dreams. Your experience is what inspires it, not impressions or direct messaging. Your artwork can be inspired by your feelings, images you see in your head while meditating, spiritual awakenings, dreams, or other experiences.

### Spiritualism in Indian Art

When we think about religious, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic variety, India is the first country that springs to mind which is evidently reflected in its incredibly rich artistic and architectural past. Religion and spirituality are a way of life here because of which Indian art is different. The ideologies and beliefs of the people who created the architecture and works of art are reflected in them. They aid in our understanding of their way of life and ability to get insight into it. The profoundly spiritual and religious concepts that have successfully influenced Indian art have inspired and had an impact on a great number of artists. They influence how people think, feel, and live, as seen in the many painting styles.

Indian sacred art has demonstrated remarkable plurality and diversity, with influences from various philosophies and religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Mongol, and Christianity; as displayed in Elephanta Caves (extolling Shiva cult of Hinduism), Vimala Temple (highlighting Shakti of Hinduism), Taj-Mahal (from Mongolism), and Church of St. John (from Christianity). Martin Gurvich, the creator of the Indian Sacred Art Museum (MOSA) in Belgium, has promoted an exchange of Eastern and Western art. He presented Indian Sacred Art to Western society with works that incorporated basic principles namely truth-Satyam, prosperity-Shivam, and beauty-Sundaram.

The Divine or God is a single entity that is the foundation of all beings and the source of their life. This Entity expresses Himself through three dynamic aspects known as "Trimurti," which are painted according to culture, notably the creation aspect-Brahma, the preservation aspect-Vishnu, and the renewal aspect-Shiva. The Shiva Lingam sculpture is associated with nuclear energy which symbolizes the destruction and renewal process for the true creation of the human Being or Sacred Art to occur (symbolized by Brahma), in order to perpetuate a new life on Earth (symbolized by Vishnu). Another part of creation is depicted in the "Tree of Life" sacred art work by Indian artists. The human dimension of the Divine on Earth is depicted through paintings and sculptures, such as the figure of Ganesha (half-human and half-elephant).

Mother Earth (in Sanskrit, Bhudevi) is depicted in Indian sacred art as a great spiritual entity with a Yoni (in Sanskrit, womb), the female sexual organ counterpart to the male sexual organ designated by Linga, which "gives birth" to the spiritual and physical bodies of all beings in the Universe. As a result, it is critical to the survival of species in Nature (cereals from the ground, water from rivers, fish from the sea, fruit from trees, meat from animals). It must be approached with caution and in a symbiotic manner in order to allow for long-term development and a balanced life between the mundane and the sacred. The earlier mentioned Shiva Lingam represents Yoni's union with Linga.

Furthermore, the human body has played an essential role in Indian sacred art, reflecting India's cultural and philosophical diversity over the millennia, in which the spiritual and sensual elements of the body are harmoniously intertwined. For instance, Raja Ravi Varma's painting "Woman Holding a Fan" (symbol of Indian women's sensuality)" and Abanindranath Tagore's painting "Mother India" (symbol of Indian women's virtues) illustrate complementary elements of the Indian woman's physique. In reality, the human body is viewed as a "instrument" in Indian sacred art, connecting the "inner psychic world" with the "physical outer world" via Yantras. This fundamental aesthetic component has been utilized in Indian religious art in diverse ways by various Indian painters from the earliest times to modernity. Where the death of the body and reincarnation of the soul in another body help us to become conscious of our true Being. In Indian sacred art, the term "devotion" (in Sanskrit, bhakti) can have different connotations depending on the context. For example, the sacred Hindu text "Bhagavad- Gita" expresses this devotional aspect between Krishna (the spiritual master) and the disciple Arjuna, who is encouraged to conquer his soul (in Sanskrit, Atman). The Hindu god Ardhanarishavara, whose left side is feminine and the right side is masculine (also known as the union of Shakti and Shiva or Prakriti and Purusha), represents human harmony and balance.



**Figure 1 :** Woman Holding a Fan by Raja Ravi Varma



**Figure 2:** Mother India by Abanindranath Tagore

### **Spiritual Artists and their Artwork**

#### **MF Hussain**

Maqbool Fida Husain was an Indian painter known for his vivid, vibrantly colored narrative paintings in a modified Cubist style. He was a prominent and widely recognized Indian artist of the twentieth century. He was a founder member of the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group. In the 1940s, M.F. Husain was connected with Indian modernism. His early work with the Bombay Progressive Artists' Group employed modern techniques and was motivated by the "new" India following the partition in 1947. Husain represents the Trimurti, the three primary gods of Hinduism, in his work "Hindu Triad". Brahma is the universe's creator, Vishnu is its protector and preserver, and Shiva is its destroyer.



Figure 3: Hindu Triad by MF Hussain

**SH Raza**

Sayed Haider Raza was an Indian painter who lived and worked in France from 1950 until his death, while keeping close relations with India. Despite the fact that he spent much of his life in France, his paintings were influenced by Indian religious iconography and philosophical notions. Not only did he use Indian colors, but he also began inscribing Sanskrit prayers/chants, Urdu and Hindi poetry into his painting. Raza's paintings explore themes such as Prakriti (nature), Kundalini (primal force), Tribhuj (triangle), and Bindu (circle/dot). According to Raza, the Bindu is the center of all creation and existence, and that "Bindu is a source of energy, a source of life." "Life begins here and ends here." Interestingly, Raza's art and design began with the Bindu as well. The bindu is the point at which the concept of Self emerges and eventually collapses. Concentric circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles in blue, yellow, red, orange, and green are set around deep black circles in his Bindu series, evoking yantras and mandalas used for meditative visualization. The geometric patterns interlock to represent the polarity of male and female energy, the yin and yang of created reality.



Figure 4: Bindu by SH Raza

**Anand Panchal**

Anand Panchal is a critically acclaimed artist who studied at the J.J School of Art in Mumbai. Lyrical, rustic worlds take center stage in Panchal's acrylics on canvas. His incandescent art documents the enduring soul of India, as seen in its indigenous culture, beliefs and traditions. From capturing the simplicity of village life to the richness of Indian mythology, the artist displays great range, punctuating the figurative and symbolic elements with abstract spaces, making his paintings appear vast as well as intimate. Buddhism represents purity of the body, speech and mind, as if floating above the murky waters of material attachment and physical desire. According to legend, Gautama Buddha's first steps made lotus flowers appear everywhere he stepped. The artist's thoughts are deeply influenced by the meditative powers of Buddha. His works translate the great philosophy of Dharma through his self conceptualized forms and symbols in a contemporary art format.

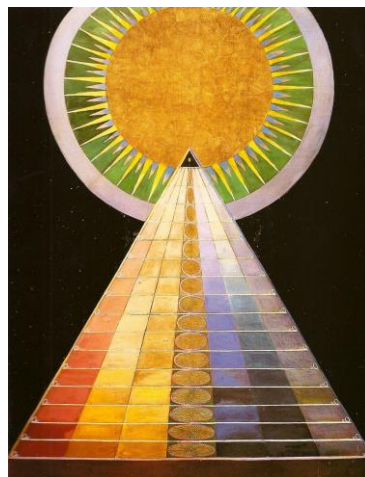




**Figure 5:** a painting of Lord Buddha by Anand Panchal

### Hilma AF Klint

The Swedish painter and a pioneer in the world of abstract art, Hilma AF Klint is the first female artist to receive a degree from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Stockholm. Abstract art uses shapes, colors, forms, and gestural strokes to create its effect rather than attempting to accurately describe a visual reality. She uses both geometrical patterns and religious symbols in her artwork, with "Altarbird" (1915) being one of her best-known pieces. The letters "U" and "W," which stand for the spiritual world and tangible things respectively in her other works, are frequently employed. This is illustrated by "Group IV, No 7. The Ten Largest, Adulthood" (1907), which has the letters "U" and "W". She gained notoriety for incorporating religion into her private and professional lives as well. Af Klint had taken part in séances, gatherings where people tried to communicate with the dead, since she was a young child. Later in life, she established the "Friday Group" of five women, who were unimaginatively referred to as "The Five." This group would have séances to communicate with supernatural creatures they referred to as "The High Ones." Many of af Klint's well-known creations, such as the 193-piece series "Paintings for the Temple" (1906-1915), were influenced by her spiritual convictions. The artist expressed concepts about parallel realms and spiritual dimensions using letters, words, and symbols. Af Klint's spiritual paintings were among the first examples of abstract art to be found in the western world, and they have had a lasting influence on the genre.

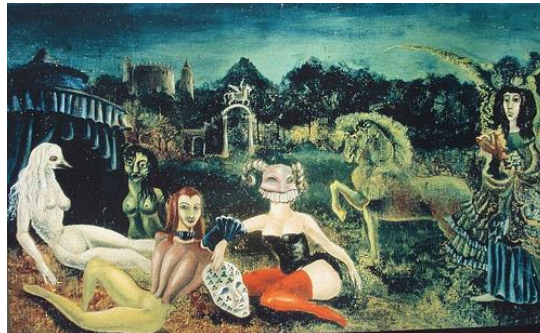


**Figure 6:** Alterbird by Hilma AF Klint

### Leonora Carrington

The British-Mexican painter Leonora Carrington is one of the most celebrated women artists from the surrealist movement. Surrealism was an art and literary movement that utilized fantasy, myth, and dream imagery when creating art. It balances a rational vision of life with one that asserts the power of the unconscious and dreams, it rebels against the limitations of the rational mind, and, therefore, repressive social norms. The Surrealists aimed to tap into the unconscious and to mix the logical with the irrational, dream, and reality to create a new hyper-reality. Many surrealist artists have used automatic drawing or writing to unlock ideas and images from their unconscious minds. Others have wanted to depict dream worlds or hidden psychological tensions. Carrington made works that were beautiful and symbolic, creating strong, mythological people within ethereal landscapes. as seen in her 1940 painting "Down Below" by Carrington, which depicts the 'underworld' as a gloomy

region populated by creatures that resemble animals. Most of her works contain magical and celestial images, and the recognizable half-animal, half-human creatures she creates connect the actual world to the fantasy. Numerous females in her own life, such as her connection with fellow surrealist artist Remedios Varo, served as inspiration for many of the women she painted.



**Figure 7:** Down Below by Leonora Carrington

### **Marina Abramovic**

The Serbian artist Marina Abramović is known for her performative Conceptual Artwork that explores ideas of spiritualism, ritual, and sacrifice. The theory that universals can be said to exist but only as a concept in the mind. Conceptual art is art for which the idea (or concept) behind the work is more important than the finished art object. A conceptual artist uses whatever materials and whatever form is most appropriate to put their idea across – this could be anything from a performance to a written description. There is no one style or form used by conceptual artists. Abramović Previously, she stated to Dazed that she is influenced by "Spiritualism on one side, French culture on another, and Russian culture on the third side." She was introduced to religious practices throughout her upbringing in Yugoslavia, where her grandmother would accompany her to the Serbian Orthodox church. Ritual is a recurring theme in Abramović's work. In "Rhythm 0" (1974), where the audience was given free rein to abuse the artist, Abramović sacrificed her body to them. One audience member came dangerously close to shooting the artist before other spectators intervened. Her work demonstrates that Abramović isn't scared to take risks. She recently made a digital sculpture that allows viewers to see her floating around the piece whilst wearing augmented reality goggles, giving her the opportunity to digitally immortalize her spirit. The performer has also declared that she will electrify herself with a million volts so that she can extinguish a candle with the simple act of pointing at it, as if by magic. This performance, scheduled for 2020, will be the first time a woman commandeers the principal gallery areas at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.



**Figure 8:** Rhythm 0 by Marina Abramovic

### **Relevance and Resurgence of Spiritual Art**

In times of upheaval, people seek alternative interpretations of reality. This was true a century ago and it is true today. The rise of modern capitalism destroyed long-established social systems, while new scientific discoveries questioned long-accepted religious beliefs, foreshadowing our own tumult day. Those who were

dissatisfied with mechanistic explanations of life and society had two options: return to now-discredited philosophies or seek alternative ways of comprehending the forces changing human life.

In recent years, we've witnessed renewed momentum surrounding spirituality in the art world. At museums, late artists who dove deeply into mysticism and religion are gaining posthumous attention. "The resurgence of spirituality is more present than ever in contemporary art," Iranian artist Parviz Tanavoli said in a recent interview. "Wars, conflicts, and consumerism seem to have prompted a desire for transcendence, for refuge, for essence. Increasingly, artists are aiming for the essence of spirituality in their work." Artists are undoubtedly looking to spiritual ideologies and theological imagery to evaluate their own beliefs and make sense of the contemporary time, regardless of their personal religious convictions.

The surge in interest could be a reaction to today's excessive commercialisation of art. There is something immensely enticing about work that defies the market by appealing to unconscious expertise. While the rich collections of religious items in art history continue to inspire modern artists, the presence of spirituality in art now feels very much related to the present. "I just think we're living in an anxious and chaotic world, and I feel like spirituality is a way to deal with that," artist Jason Harris explained. "Perhaps many other people are feeling the same way."

Although it's practically impossible to pin down a single explanation for today's rebirth of spirituality in contemporary art, many artists are using their work to reflect on personal convictions, religious or not. They may use religion to investigate metaphysical concepts or reinterpret religious iconography to address important secular challenges. Time will tell whether the resurrection of these topics is only a symptom of the current state of affairs or a new path forward.

However, the growing openness to spirituality reflects our contemporary state of turmoil. Once again, we are confronted with destabilizing forces, including widening inequality, which demonstrates the inadequacies of neoliberal assumptions about the logic of the market. AI and increasingly sophisticated corporate and government surveillance are threatening our entire sense of self and society. And it is widely acknowledged that materialism has resulted in a climatic crisis that may herald the end of life as we know it. A rising search for alternatives has resulted in an upsurge of interest in spiritual and spiritualist themes.

Many artists today are eager to admit to spiritual influences on their work. Some people go even further, attempting to harness unconscious or even supernatural forces via drugs, hypnosis, or seances. Others look for portals through technology. Instead of the spiritual advancement promised by esoteric ideologies such as theosophy and anthroposophy, they must contend with the Singularity and its premise that artificial intelligence is the next stage of (non)human evolution. Though none of these has yet become an identifiable movement, it appears that modern art and the spirit have reached a tentative truce.

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