Chapter 3: Aesthetic Field, Aesthetic Medium, and New Media

The previous chapter reviewed significant theories for the aspects involved in analysing and appreciating art, whereby the developmental course of Aesthetics initiated appositely with Alexander Baumgarten's *Reflections,* was discussed. Arnold Berleant (1970) extrapolates the features central to some of these theories and subsequently calls them "surrogate theories." He particularly employs this phrase because, instead of configuring the features peculiar to aesthetic experience, these theories associate the experience with already available and identifiable formulations. For instance, *Imitation* theories judge art by its representational potential, where it must rightly reflect the object that is outside the aesthetic situation's perceptual immediacy. *Emotionalist* theories highlight the affective function of art over its other aspects by concluding that aesthetic experience is made of aesthetic emotion, which itself is defined indistinctly. *Expression* theories prioritise the ideas expressed over the aesthetic aspects of the object of art as well as the audience's direct interaction with it. *Communication* theories stress the correct meaning conveyed through art, where the focus shifts farther away from the artwork, turning aesthetic experience into a chiefly cognitive rather than immediate and aesthetic activity. *Formalist* theories give undue attention to the form, resulting in the exclusion of all other factors that play a role in the appreciation of art (Berleant 1970, 24-38).

These approaches to art favour one aspect of experience while underplaying others. So, moving away from these, Berleant looks at art as a social event where "the art object does not exist in a world by itself, [instead] it occupies a place in the broad matrix of human experience" (37). He proposes to examine experience as experience itself and look for its intrinsic qualities by not restricting the understanding of art experience to any one of these activities, i.e., imitative, cognitive, expressive, communicative, or symbolic (46). And for this, the nature of each component involved in the aesthetic situation must be studied.

John Dewey's reintroduction of aesthetic situation in his explanation of aesthetic experience is of notable importance here. To him, an aesthetic situation is a field around which the experience takes shape.[48] It denotes the material setting of the experience. Berleant develops on this and suggests that the aesthetic *field* formed around the aesthetic situation

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[48] See Dewey, *Logic* (72–73). Here, Dewey uses the term "field" without conceptualising its structure, which Berleant later does (1970).

provides an implicative context in which an art object is "actively and creatively experienced" (1970, 47). To understand the *field*[49], aesthetic situation must be gauged, which in turn is subject matter to the medium of dissemination and experience (i.e., the aesthetic medium) and further affects the comprehension of multifaceted aesthetic field. Drawing from this, the second chapter concluded that one must meditate on this medium to wholly grasp the experience, and the present chapter aims to understand the medium at hand, i.e., Instagram as a social media platform. But before it sets out on that journey, various complications regarding the basic postulations on the concept of *medium* in art must be attended to and therefore be resolved.

One characterisation of the aesthetic field can be seen in the definition of aesthetic medium's functions that "effect" and "constrain" artwork's executional possibilities— 'affordances' as Ian Hutchby calls them (2001).[50] Aesthetic field can also be characterised by a set of non-material implications on the experience of art which emerge as a by-product of mediation. Mel Stanfill's tripartite differentiation of medium affordances—functional, cognitive, and sensory—can be used to look at both material and non-material factors relating to the medium. [51] Moreso, aesthetic medium is not to be confused with artistic medium, even though there may be a certain overlapping effect of one on the other.

Accordingly, the next section of the chapter will elaborate on the differences as well as convergent definitions of artistic and aesthetic mediums and attempt at a comprehensive understanding of the term *medium* in context with art. It will also explain how medium can be determined as an aesthetic field and further point to the implications of a medium that go beyond the mere material consequences evident to any simple observation. The section that follows will use New Media theories to inquire about and articulate the intangible effects of the medium, with a special focus on social media as an aesthetic field. Lastly, a detailed examination of Instagram as an aesthetic field will lead to a conclusive perception of art on

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[49] Berleant's notion of *aesthetic field* has been established, and from now on, the term will not be italicised.

[50] These affordances are relational in nature; they are actualised and exist only in their relationship to the user (Hopkins 48). So the affordances may be functional in limiting the course of agentic action but they never determine the terms of use. Platform affordances, thus, help explain how platform content moves by avoiding *technological determinism*. For example, the Instagram user interface (when seen as an "affordance" of the Instagram platform) does limit user's interactions and transactions on Instagram but does not determine all the courses of action and activity on Instagram. Instagram initially served as an image-sharing platform, but over time, photographers and other artists began to use it in their own inventive ways, which the Instagram user interface is now well suited to support.

[51] Any action that a user can take on the platform is made possible by functional affordances. On other platforms, these possibilities might be absent altogether because of the non-existence of certain functional affordances. Cognitive affordances direct the interface's meaning-making. Aspects like "naming, labelling, and/or site taglines and self-descriptions" inform this process (Stanfill 1063). Sensory affordances are all the functions that relate to the user's senses. These are defined by the interface's "visibility, legibility, or audibility" (1064).

Instagram as a way to understand poetry on Instagram, which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

3.1 Aesthetic Field and Aesthetic Medium

To say that art is realised through communication is not to claim that art is defined only by its realisation by an audience.[52] However, it stands to reason that communication is a crucial process for any work of art to reach its full potential as a message. And for communication of any kind, presence of a medium is a must. To David Davies, a medium "in its most general sense... is a means of transmitting some matter or content from a source to a site of reception" (181). Construed in this way, mediation is the core function of a medium. When art is concerned, medium can be distinguished as either an artistic medium or aesthetic medium.

3.1.1 Artistic Medium

Artistic medium refers to the physical or material means used by an artist to shape their message—art. Davies uses the term "art media" and further characterises it as: material determinables, material value of determinables, and systems of sign (181).[53] According to Daniel Wack (2017), any artistic medium spatiotemporally organises the experience of artwork's audience and therefore the experience is varied in every medium. But to believe that a full understanding of a medium alone contributes towards a proper appreciation of art (in that medium) is both an essentialist fallacy as well as an impasse for translatability of art. This is so because the medium neither precedes nor succeeds art; it is realised, as John Dewey points out, during the process of creation.[54]

Thus, the artistic medium is critical to the creation of an artwork. Nevertheless, it is not independent of the artist's creative process. It is very much a part of the process, as artists discover the vehicle of expression as an artistic medium when they use it to study a specific

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[52] Eric Newton proposes that "a work of art does not exist until it has reached a state in which it can make its impact on the sensory perceptions of others—people we can call spectators or audience" (71). He goes on to explain that the ideas that an artist harbours in his mind like an embryo still count as art and have a significant impact on the adult that the work of art becomes when an audience realises it. Arnold Berleant suggests that looking at art as mere one-way communication restricts its potential as an expression as well as a creative act (1970, 32). In reality, there is always an exchange, a back and forth, in the process of creation where the artist negotiates between his vision and the possibility of it meeting an audience.

[53] Adam Hammond explains that, as opposed to a medium, a modality is a type of information communicated through a medium. He mentions four modalities: text, still images, moving images, and sound (13)

[54] David Wack states this while referring to John Dewey's *Art as Experience* (1934) in his article "Artistic Medium." However, a detailed citation of the same is not available in the article. According to the researcher's reading of Dewey's work, it seems that such theorisation occurs in the second chapter of the book.

artistic problem or tradition. In other words, when artists try to investigate a certain creative challenge or carry on a specific artistic heritage, they learn what is feasible within that medium (Wack 2017). For instance, if one takes rhyme in poetry as a medium of expression, the decision to use it depends on the speaker's expressive needs, which may range from mere ornamentation to symbolism in poetry.

Therefore, Noel Carroll's approach is skeptical about essentialism concerning media considerations. Medium Skepticism counters the claims of essentialist stance, which reasons for and appropriates art by first reflecting upon the nature of the medium (the material core of an artwork) (1985, 7). According to Carroll, who talks about film theory, medium specificity sometimes leads to imposing of artistic norms on art rather than freeing it. This results in limiting the scope of appreciation of art, which neither allows new possibilities to enter its critique nor permits prospects for further creativity with the medium. The technique of using film projector on stage for flashbacks and parallel narratives in Saeed Naqvi's play *The Muslim Vanishes* (2022) directly checks the essentialist view and is eminent evidence of why it must be corrected.

While the danger of essentialism regarding artistic mediums must be avoided, it must be understood that a proper appreciation of artwork takes into account not only the material apparatus but also the environment in which the artwork is introduced and experienced. Accordingly, the environment provided by the material medium (platform) in which an artwork is received and experienced will be termed an aesthetic medium.[55]

3.1.2 Aesthetic Medium

If the artistic medium organises the audience's spatiotemporal experience, the aesthetic medium, as a medium of experience, directs the audience's experience under the influence of time and space contexts. For instance, a film that is watched on a cinema screen and the same film watched on a phone or a TV set renders varied experiences. The same printed text, when transferred to electronic format, enters the contextual space of the digital world, i.e., "When the Net absorbs a medium, that medium is re-created in the Net's image" (Hammond 6). Many times, the same artistic medium can be used differently for different mediums of experience. For instance, a film directed and written for OTT platforms may not be successful on the

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[55] The term is derived from John Dewey's distinction between artistic experience and aesthetic experience (1980, 50–55).

cinema screen and vice versa. This may happen because the writing and directing of an OTT film are oriented to make it more engaging in that medium. Another instance of this is how differently one responds to the stories telecasted with song accompaniment on the radio and to the same stories played on YouTube. Thus, examining only the artistic medium does not suffice for a fair critique of art.

Aesthetic medium is not merely a medium on which art is experienced. Aesthetic medium is distinguished from a mere medium of experience by its merit in determining art's production and publication/exhibition patterns (as discussed in the above-mentioned examples). It affects and expands the ways in which an artistic medium is used. Aesthetic medium operates within its own set of functionality, which determines how art will be organised and how artistic medium will be manipulated according to former's demands. For example, rendering of acoustic pieces of popular songs on Instagram *Reels* and YouTube *Shorts* by artists who require quick attention of the audience work as snippet performances that try to adjust to the algorithm of these platforms while showing the best capabilities of the artist.

However, before claiming the absolute sway of the aesthetic medium over everything that art and artistic medium are and can be, some presumptions must be avoided. Firstly, the artistic medium necessarily undergoes a prominent change when under the influence of various aesthetic mediums. While there might be certain ways in which the artistic medium appears differently, crucial changes may not always be experienced. John Berger talks about the use of artwork with the onset of new technology in his 1972 book *Ways of Seeing*. He observes that the artistic medium of painting as visual art remains the same, but the ways of experiencing it change with the use of new technology. What ultimately happens, however, is the creation of a new artistic medium that is digital in nature. Digital tools as an artistic medium, at times, use the same paintings and give birth to a new kind of art by editing and mixing them.[56]

Second confusion that must be cleared is that evolution of art and creation of subgenres are entirely caused by the introduction of a new aesthetic medium. This is not true, as there can be various other reasons for it. This viewpoint takes away the burden (blame or credit) on the aesthetic medium of being responsible for any and every change in art; it also encourages the study of changes (taking place in a culture) that drive aesthetic mediums to operate in a certain way. Pakistani artist Ali Sethi's experimental work on old ghazals like Mehdi Hassan's *Gulon Mein Rang Bhare* ("Coke Studio") can be recalled in this case. Execution of this ghazal by the

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[56] Digital tools as an artistic medium will be discussed in detail at the end of this section.

Coke Studio team is one example of Sethi's classic fusion. Here, the evolution in the genre of ghazal and the fusion style are a result of the platform as well as the global reach of music in contemporary times.

Lastly, one must note that an alternate use of the same artistic medium in a new aesthetic medium does not invariably result in a new subgenre. There are instances where alternate use does not contribute to a separate subgenre. A short film shared via YouTube does not always translate to a YouTube Short Film. This happens because YouTube, as a platform, does not provide the artistic medium of film with any exclusive tools to afford a YouTube-specific experience. Meanwhile, there is also a rising subgenre of short films now known as Instagram Short Films, as they use the tools provided by Instagram to produce the film.[57] The same stands for Instagram Video Essays as well as YouTube Video Essays.[58] These essays are engineered keeping in mind the special needs of the platform audience and so, they inform, appease, and entertain all at once. The content and the way the content is organised will essentially be determined on these premises.

Earlier, it was mentioned that the aesthetic medium affects the experience of the audience in time and space context. For that matter, even the artistic medium does the same to a certain extent. But the aesthetic medium's time context works differently. For example, depending on the medium, the experience of art can either be synchronous, like in live concerts and stage plays, or it can be asynchronous, like recorded songs on a music app and recorded plays on YouTube. In the second scenario, one has the liberty to experience art at their own leisure, which means they meddle with the experience that art is supposed to provide and make the experience suit their convenience. This results in a new kind of experience.

Further, the context of physical space too has consequences for the way art is experienced in different aesthetic mediums. Here, the comparison is not limited to online vs. offline media or digital vs. non-digital platforms; it extends even to the physical environment in the same mode of communication. Factors like comfort of experiencing, public sphere, private sphere, and so on affect the way art will be experienced. A simple illustration of this is marked in the difference between the response of a poetry reader when amongst the members of a poetry club and her response to the same piece of writing when amongst friends who do not identify a deep

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[57] Satvik Soni (@stvksn) and Sourabh Yadav (@sourabhvourabh) are among the many Instagram Short Film makers, while @illneas does the same on YouTube with much higher production value and longer poetry videos.

[58] @anuragminusverma, Natalie Wynn (@contrapoints), etc. exemplify creators of Instagram Video Essay while videos by CrashCourse on YouTube are a good example of YouTube Video Essay.

interest in the field of literature. However, there is perhaps no limit to the combinations of multiple situations one experiences art in. It then becomes free of all criticism because the viewpoint considers every situation's experience legit and apt for their own fake.

The environment of the experience per se can never be controlled and so lies beyond the scope of the present study as well. What this research will therefore limit itself to is the physical medium or the platform of the audience's experience. Moreover, the analysis will also try to avoid being fixated on the materials and tools that the medium provides so that an essentialist stance around the aesthetic medium (same as the artistic medium) can be circumvented.

3.1.3 *New* Aesthetic Medium

At this point, it is intriguing to also explore the possibilities that may arise when artistic medium and aesthetic medium both go digital. In the artistic medium, the medium assumes a digital version only because the material tools to realise art are digital. For instance, visual art like a painting can be produced, reproduced, and edited using digital tools for design. Collage, morphing, pixelating, and other effects using Photoshop are some of the popular ways in which old and new artworks can be made, remixed, and edited. These are not always made for online platforms, since they are exhibited offline as well. However, they receive a platform-specific response when shared online. Joseph Nechvatal's works are exemplary representations of computer-robotic-assisted art using acrylic on canvas (see fig. 3.1).

Another instance of this, with many others, is Harshit Agarwal's *Tandem: Art with AI*[59] where he uses the assistance of artificial intelligence to create art. Further, James Bridle is credited for coining the term New Aesthetic[60] for artwork whose thematic concerns involve the digital world and is also most of the time produced digitally (Sterling 2012). This type of art aims to convey the idea that the digital world has become too commonplace for people to notice its pressing influence on human lives. Many such images can be found in Bridle's archive on Tumblr (see fig. 3.2 and 3.3)

The aesthetic medium in figures 3.2 and 3.3 differ. While the former image was exhibited in an open space (offline), the latter was used as a stock image in an online magazine article.

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[59]See harshitagrawal.com/works/tandem and surl.li/mkyzon for further reference.

[60] New Aesthetic refers to James Bridle's collection of images of artwork, sculptures, and cultural artefacts on his website in 2012, which has now continued under the handle "The New Aesthetic" on Tumblr. These images showcase a "Digital vision and computer-assisted perception" that has seeped through everyday human life. In a way, new aesthetic objects represent an explosion of digital into the physical world and show how "we are already cyborgs, and we should know it" (Lossyculture 2017).

Consequently, interaction of the audience with each artwork also differs. New Aesthetic seeks to examine these very subtle patterns of interaction. According to Bruce Sterling, the New Aesthetic objects foreground the rhizomatic nature of the involvement of digital with humans—where the two are not mutually exclusive—to convey political, social, cultural, and artistic concerns. Thus, New Aesthetic is not only a curation of objects that represent a coming together of physical and digital—which is unrealised, even though widely accepted, given the pervasive digitalisation of human life—but also a sensibility, a "shareable concept", that highlights the politics and possibilities that are set in motion by this convergence.[61]

Fig. 3. 1 "The Informed Man" (1986) by Nechvatal exemplifying computer-robotic assisted art shared by Jessica Robinson
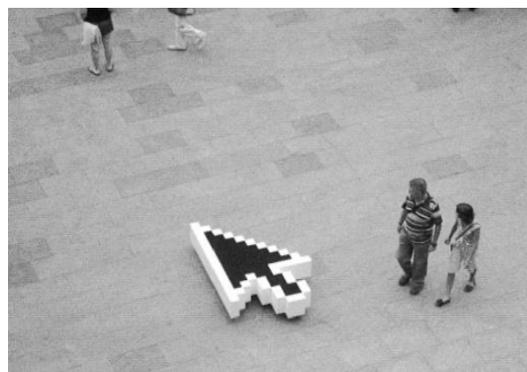

Fig. 3. 2 Illustration of new aesthetic art curated by James Bridle: 1. Object shaped as an oversized 3-D computer cursor

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[61] The entry of digital technology into physical life has significantly transformed the way people see, perceive, and live. And the aim of New Aesthetic artworks is to draw attention to this unnoticed phenomenon. However, this is not all its payoff, as it also "is deeply engaged with the politics and politicisation of networked technology and seeks to explore, catalogue, categorise, connect, and interrogate these things... [It] articulates the deep coherence and multiplicity of connections and influences of the network itself" (Bridle 2013). Vito Campanelli uses the term "Web Aesthetics" (2010) for aesthetic experiences (and modes of perception) on the web, i.e., Internet/digital media. He too points out the increasing role of new media in the aestheticisation (relating it to the postmodern "aesthetic turn") of contemporary networked society.
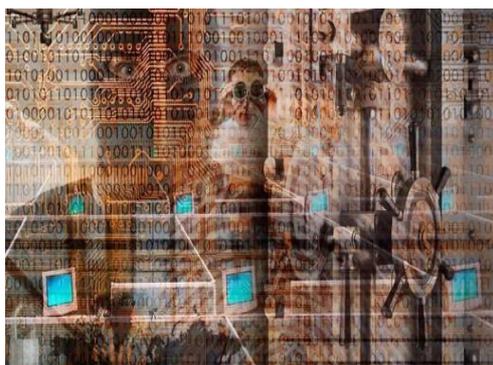
Fig. 3. 3 Illustration of new aesthetic art curated by James Bridle: 2. Image by John Lund used by Timothy Revell[62]

The present chapter limits itself to examining the particulars of digitally created art which is published on digital platforms—the *New* Aesthetic Medium. Understanding this digital aesthetic medium will also help to explore online behaviour of the audience, and its causes, as well as its presence vis-à-vis offline interaction with art. To achieve this, the following sections will attempt to study digital aesthetic medium and the corresponding aesthetic field around which art experiences build themselves. A special focus will be laid on social media as one such digital aesthetic medium. But before, the notion of aesthetic medium as an aesthetic field must be understood. Accordingly, the next section endeavours to revisit the definition of aesthetic field discussed in the second chapter.

3.1.4 Aesthetic Field

As discussed in the last chapter, experiences—aesthetic and non-aesthetic—are not isolated. Any experience is a result of interactivity with the environment it is situated in and is embedded in a "contextual whole" that John Dewey calls "situation" (Dewey 1980, 12). Observing experience's "situation" leads to configuring the *field* of that experience. In other words, the object or the event of experience is observed to form an understanding of the *field* in relation to a certain "active adaptive response" to be made in following a particular course of conduct (Dewey 1986, 72-73). Arnold Berleant develops this very concept to explain variances in aesthetic experiences on multiple levels (For instance, the psychological state of the artist, readiness of the audience, the materiality of art, and the environment of its introduction that influences all the above).

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[62] Bridle reuses the stock image by John Lund (on Getty Images) used in Timothy Revell's online article on *New Scientist.* Following is the link to Bridle's post archived on Tumblr new-aesthetic.tumblr.com/post/152380655601/googles-neural-networks-invent-their-own

Berleant's observations on aesthetic field (1970) are pivotal to the discussions that will follow in this chapter, as he establishes compatibility between aesthetic theory and radical changes in art's range in the light of contemporary technology. He adopts an empirical approach and primarily recommends analysing the experiential matrix of art and aesthetic perception—the aesthetic field. It is through the study of the aesthetic field, according to him, that one can equally engage the questions on recent innovations in art as well as traditional art.

Following components are identified by Berleant as a part of the field: the art object, the perceiver, the artist, the performer, biological factors, psychological factors[63], material and technological factors, historical factors, and socio-cultural factors. While art object, perceiver, artist, and performer form the nucleus of the field, rest of the factors participate in the field by conditioning it.

The art object is the event or a physical object that causes the occurrence of an aesthetic experience. It is both the centre of the perceiver's attention and the major stimulus of the experience. Again, an art object does not naturally translate into a work of art. Because for it to be realised as a work of art, an art object must work on the percipient, and the percipient must work on it (Berleant 1970, 52). However central, any art object's intrinsic qualities cannot suffice as the only measure to analyse and judge its experience. What is equally at work here is the percipient's outlook, willingness, and readiness, which may differ to varying degrees in all individuals. At least two fallibilities arise from such a relativist understanding. First, this argument makes all criticism either an impossibility or an ever-shifting judgement. And second, such a viewpoint becomes a point where critique of art gradually hints at critique of a people. Berleant does not intend for all criticism to end. Instead, he only suggests ways to confront the possibilities that art objects can create when put in newer contexts,[64] while not limiting the analysis to just the object and its perceiver.

Artist, as a creator of the conditions for an aesthetic experience, is another crucial component of the field. It is the artist who first actively perceives art, contributing towards giving it shape. So, it stands that artistic experience in all art informs the consequent aesthetic experience. Further, the anticipation of aesthetic experience also influences the artist's experience in executing the artwork (Dewey 1934, 55). Thus, the matrix of artistic experience

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[63] Under psychological factors Berleant suggests looking into the psychology of perception, appreciation, and artistic creation (1970, 76)

[64] Berleant claims that the physical limits of an art object do not suggest its experimental limits (1970, 52). This statement also resolves the question of media specificity raised by Noel Carroll.

defines all that is to be set forth from the moment of its birth, and the artist becomes the source of information and explanation of aesthetic experience (Berleant 1970, 61). Hence, locating the artist in the context of production (including the context of cultural and artistic traditions) sensitises the perception of art and supports insights into its features and qualities, if not fully dominating its judgement.

The factors condition the aesthetic field by determining the functioning of its core components prior to and at the moment of their transaction during an aesthetic experience (see fig. 3.4). Again, internally, these factors have a force to lead one another as they are not completely independent of one another. For instance, socio-cultural factors (pertaining to time, place, and space) may result in the use of certain technology to create and experience art, and, in turn, that might also affect the biological factors (like attention span of an individual) along with psychology of perception (like cognitive skills). Thus, studying the aesthetic field offers a unified and non-reductive analysis of aesthetic experience, allowing a proper logic for aesthetic judgements.
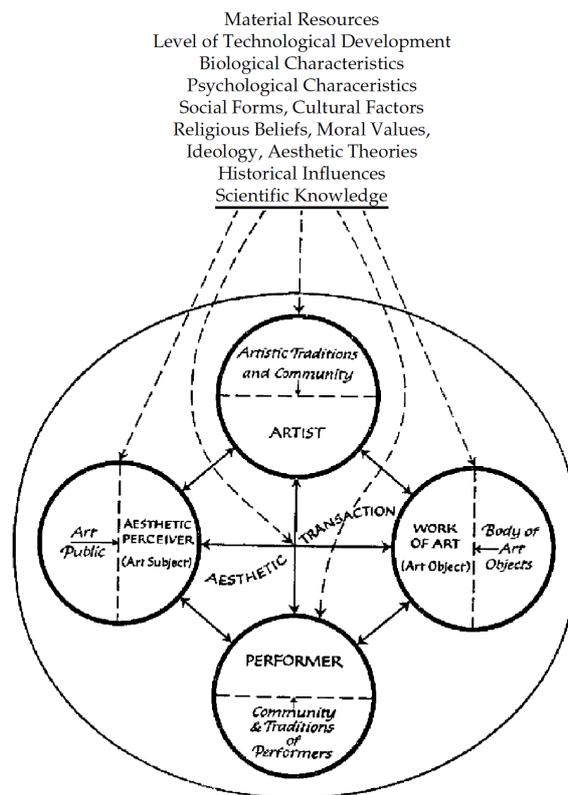
Fig. 3. 4 Diagram of Aesthetic Field as proposed by Arnold Berleant (1970, 49)

3.1.5 Aesthetic Medium and Aesthetic Field

Aesthetic situation that comprises the physical circumstances of an experience adapts to the features of the medium of experience. Because of the dependability of the aesthetic field on these circumstances, the factors affecting it as well as its components will experience variance. Thus, the medium of experience constructs a corresponding aesthetic field. This field may not serve as a universal frame to look at all art, although it is effectively competent to inquire about the experience of most art produced and published with the said medium.

As discussed above, it is crucial to acknowledge the aesthetic field to arrive at a pragmatic judgement of art, and to comprehend the field, one must have a complete grasp of the medium around which it is constructed. To achieve this, one has to gather particulars of what builds and defines a specific medium apart from others. Therefore, studying the medium of experience is necessitated for two reasons. First, to know if the medium is an aesthetic medium, i.e., if it has any contribution in determining the production and publication/exhibition of art. Secondly, to note how, as an aesthetic medium, it impacts art.

When it comes to a medium, one may be reminded of Marshall McLuhan's popular line, "The medium is the message," from *Understanding Media* (1994 [1964]). Behind using this "catchphrase" to characterise his theory was McLuhan's core message, where he governed that the role of the medium of the message be studied over that of its content.[65] With this, the specific focus on media and its involvement in art and culture developed under the rubrics of media studies. If the aesthetic field helped explain the components and factors involved in an aesthetic transaction, media studies would shed light on how a medium effects changes, concrete and relational,[66] in the aesthetic field by modifying its components and factors.

In *Digital McLuhan* (1999), Paul Levinson notes that McLuhan's observations about content, message, and medium resonate, moreso with the digital media, as they have noticeably

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[65] Mike Chasar in *Poetry Unbound* (2020) discusses the spread of poetry with the technology of magic lanterns during the early 20th century. Thus, the introduction of technology in experiencing traditional art is not a new discovery. Even though the practice existed, it was McLuhan (1964), who, observing the boost in the use of new media technology, drew attention towards the nuances introduced by media and technology to art.

[66] The aesthetic medium goes beyond the material that the artistic medium represents. Considering the medium as only materially impacting art is incomplete. When evaluating art, one must examine the aesthetic field, which comprises not only the material means by which the work of art is projected but also the institution that the material medium stands for and holds. And therefore, both concrete (material) and relational (affected by the institutions pertaining to the material medium) changes have to be considered when the modifications in the aesthetic field are evaluated.

created new situations for human associations and perceptions.[67] Digital media, spun out of the Internet, primarily work around functions of distributing information and facilitating communication. Therefore, studying digital media as an aesthetic medium will, by default, include their informational and communicational characteristics. And so, tapping these dimensions becomes crucial in comprehending the nature of the components of aesthetic field, like material sources, biological and psychological factors, and socio-cultural factors. The following section attempts to understand these components of aesthetic field of Instapoetry by first traversing through one of the smaller territories of the digital world, i.e., Web 2.0 and Social Media. Since the focus of the thesis is poetry on Instagram, the latter section will attempt to further define this aesthetic field by mapping out the particulars of Instagram as a digital medium and a social media platform used for online networking.

3.2 Digital and Social Media

Digital media, as one experiences today, has undergone a significant transformation, from being just informational to being communicational. This evolutionary shift came about as digital media, initially embracing the web design in the internet's early phases, i.e., Web 1.0, aligned with the participatory model of Web 2.0. Among the other possibilities created by this design, Internet participatory media also made it easier to share, view, and engage with art online. With digital media providing more and more platforms for such exchanges,[68] the Internet has materialised as an art medium where art can be both produced and published.

3.2.1 Digital Media, Remediation, and Art

When the internet is seen as an art medium, it is important to address the question of 'Internet art'. Even though Internet art and digital art intersect each other's definitional grounds, they are not one and the same. Art produced using digital media is digital art, that which new aesthetic proposes to look at. But it becomes Internet art when it is published online, because digital interconnectedness has a role to play in its overall experience. Since the creation as well as the experience of art are suffused by the logic of the web, the internet emerges as an aesthetic

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[67] While discussing the third wave of digital humanities, David Berry suggests the necessity of studying the computationality of digitally born forms located within computational mediums to record the epistemic changes consequent to the medial changes (4).

[68] One of the early examples of this is deviant.Art; see www.deviantart.com/. An Xiao Mina traces the origins of the internet as an art medium in her article series "Always Social" (2010).

medium. Renata Šparada notes a few apparent behaviours of this remediation of art on the internet:

> Either the communication happening in the medium can be manipulated by an artist in the specific artwork, or the communication between users can be part of the authorship that manipulates the content. This manipulation of communication is the essence of the internet as an aesthetic medium. (6)

In *Understanding Media*, McLuhan suggests studying the ways in which a medium changes/creates a message and stresses the role of medium in shaping the content of the message. Most forms of art on the internet, i.e., content of internet art, are pre-existent in the non-internet world, where they have already assumed a certain meaning (a meaning that is situated within the dynamics of offline media), but whose experiences are remade when they appear online. This means that the same message cannot fully retain its meaning when it is placed within a system introduced by a newer medium, and to top it off, it goes through a process of re-signification. This transition of experience is almost translational and is referred to as *remediation* by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin (2000).

Remediation of forms of art, especially literary ones, was not introduced for the first time by the emergence of new media or digital media.[69] What is different about new media is not remediation, but the ways in which it (i.e., new media) refashions old media, and how the old media reshapes itself to accommodate the challenges posed by new media. Inquiring about this refashioning lies at the threshold of understanding Internet art. When discussing remediation of art, it is crucial to note that both non-digital and digital art forms can be seen as remediated if they utilise the digital media as a means of presentation (in the former category) and production + presentation (in the latter category). For instance, digital poetry (created as well as published on the web) must be seen as a remediated form of poetry that was pre-existent in the non-digital print mode.

Adam Hammond suggests that remediation, like translation, gives artworks a new life; it revises the experience of the message without changing its content (58). Through the example of poetry, he explains the double logic of remediation in refashioning art forms. He derives from Bolter and Grusin, who initially proposed the theory of remediation and illuminated its

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[69] Adam Hammond notes that media historians have spoken of four ages of literature: "the oral age, when literature was performed from memory for live audiences; the chirographic or manuscript age, when, after the development of the alphabet, literature attained its first written form; the print age, in which writing became subject to mechanical reproduction; and the digital age we are presently entering" (22).

axial functioning through the double logic of "immediacy" and "hypermediacy".[70] It is artwork's requirement that determines the nature of remediation. Hammond shows traces of immediacy and hypermediacy in poetry and illustrates these through the digitised version of Emily Dickinson's "Alone and in a Circumstance" and digitally recreated version of Eliot's "The Waste Land," respectively (64–72).

3.2.2 Digital Textuality and Digital Reading

Over and above the logic of remediation intrinsic to the modes of content representation, what also drastically alters the content on digital media is the mode of perception. Perception of content is not directly extrinsic to the modes of content construction and representation but is fairly independent from these processes.[71] Reading, as a means of perception, is another site to be examined to source the shift in content occurring due to change in medium. In other words, medium affects reading, which then reconstructs the perception of content, and that, in turn, changes the message. Hammond, for instance, finds a variance in digital literary reading patterns. He registers how this change percolates through most reading activities today.

Following is an extensive description of the same:

> No group is more sensitive to the changes inherent in the shift to digital forms than readers of literature. What the digital age has accomplished, above all else, is to defamiliarize the act of reading. It has done so by offering us choices. We begin reading an article in a print magazine on the bus; when we get to work, we finish reading it on the magazine's website. In the living room, we read novels on our tablets; in bed, we thumb the pages of a paperback. Reading a photocopied scholarly article, we discover another article we would like to consult; opening our laptops, we head for the library website and download the PDF. As we shift back and forth between print and digital forms, reading becomes an increasingly self-conscious act. We study not only the words on the page or the screen but also the way that the medium itself seems to shape our reading (4).

With the coming of the digital age and its effects described above on reading, questions such as these are often raised:

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[70] Immediacy/transparency means erasing all traces of mediacy where the medium disappears, and the thing represented emerges; it means experience without mediation (Bolter and Grusin 23). Hypermediacy "multiplies the signs of mediation" and makes the medium's presence more apparent. At any point, both logics of remediation co-exist (in unique and complex ways); they are collectively exhaustive and not mutually exclusive.

[71] Audience perception is not extrinsic, because it is mostly considered at the time of creation. However, every time a represented object is perceived, it leads to a unique reconstruction of that object. In that sense, perception is also independent of the process of construction and representation.

Is it harder to concentrate on a long novel on an iPad, where e-mail notifications and Twitter messages easily break the spell of narrative? Does an embedded video in an "enhanced e-book" enrich the reading experience or merely distract from it? If the ability to discuss a novel with an online reading community transforms a solitary experience into a social one, is this for the better or worse? (4).

The first question enquires about the lack of concentration in digital reading, and it cannot be addressed justly unless digital text is adequately defined and characterised. However, it is also necessary to point out that prior to the characterisation of digital text, the digital world itself cannot be conceived as opposite to the realm of "reality" (MacDowall and Budge 41). Because digital is an extension of the physical, the contours of digital text cannot be exclusively innovative compared to what is non-digital.

Janet Hughes suggests that media used for creating the text change the materiality of text, and therefore, it also changes the way one receives or reads the text. She sees digital text as a performance that is beyond mere static 'words on page' (Hughes 2008, 150). Because of digital mediums, different modalities of text (or modes of expression) like aural, visual, spatial, gestural, and linguistic come together. This fundamentally rearranges the printed word's relationship with image and sound.[72]

Further, even the interface of digital media, as a material affordance of a medium, crucially partakes in repositioning the experience of digital textuality. For example, besides resolving the issues of disproportionate dimensions of landscape and portrait orientations (because portrait occupies the entire screen of the phone and landscape only occupies a small portion of the mobile phone screen), the square format of an Instagram post also creates a perpetual cycle of scrolling for Instagram users, as the next article on the home *Feed* is always partially visible on the screen, enticing users to continue browsing. This ultimately results in more time spent on the app/website.

While Hammond describes digital textuality as "noisy, busy, frantic" that makes it difficult to muster focus (6), Adriaan van der Weel (2011) sketches the various features of digital textuality in detail.[73] Some of these characteristics of digital textuality that hint at a

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[72] Hughes further adds that new media performance is "multimodal rather than text-based; collective rather than individual; shared rather than private; multi-interpretive rather than a single meaning; playful rather than serious; integrated rather than singular" (2008, 152).

[73] The reference of *Changing Our Textual Minds* (2011) by Adriaan van der Weel is derived from Adam Hammond's introduction to digital literatures in *Literature in the Digital Age: An Introduction* (2016).

change in digital reading are: Textual Instability, Speed, Two-way Traffic, and Lack of Hierarchy. Textual instability refers to the constant flux that textuality on digital media is characterised with. Digital text is not fixed; its alterability results in absence of closure, unlike in print media. Again, the speed with which text reaches the audiences is much faster, and it takes fewer efforts and less time to access it as well. Since the audience receives more in less time, they consume text on digital media at a faster pace. Two-way traffic of digital textuality suggests the reversibility and lessening rigidity of the server-client roles, as readers are not mere readers but become producers too (this will be elaborated on in the next section on participatory culture). Lack of hierarchy is another character where textuality is not centralised; however, its end result is doubtfully democratic.

All these features collectively determine the way in which reading shifts in digital media compared to its counterpart in print media; they also suggest that reading and learning on digital platforms do not stop, rather their respective styles change. Moreover, one more feature, i.e., abundance (not mentioned in Weel's work), can be added to the list. The project of archiving print and other texts by digitising prompts an attitude that goes beyond the project's initial purpose and aim. Digital medium, which initially was meant to preserve rare manuscripts, later came to be used for accumulating and collecting in greater quantities rather than really delving into the text. Abundant access and availability culminated in diminishing importance of the text at hand. Tangential to this building attitude among users of digital media is the concept of FOMO or Fear of Missing Out. FOMO, which is a coinage and outgrowth of the digital world, is relevant to online as well as offline modes of experience. People are so anxious about missing out on text that they miss experiencing the text in its entirety, resulting in scattered focus. However, this is only one of the effects of abundance.

The second question seeks to understand the effects of coming together with different media on digital platforms. This points towards but is not the same as, the multi-modality feature of digital text mentioned by Hughes (2008) and Weel (2011). Matt Hills, who talks about mobile media (2009), proposes to comprehend this "media convergence" as a site where different media technologies meet. Henry Jenkins sees convergence as a paradigm shift[74] rather than just an intersection of delivery mechanisms; it is a shift away from "medium-specific

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[74] Jenkins refers to convergence as a paradigm shift because he refers to Lisa Gitelman's definition of "medium." On the one hand, medium is a technology (delivery systems) that enables communication, while on the other, it is also the set of associated protocols (social and cultural) and cultures that spring up as a result of that technology. Delivery systems may become obsolete with time, but the social and cultural practices associated with them linger on adding to the layers of communication and information stratum (2006, 13-14).

content to content that flows across multiple media channels, towards the increased interdependence of communications systems, towards multiple ways of accessing media content" (Hills 107) (Jenkins 2006, 243).

In media convergence, there is a change in how media is produced and consumed (Jenkins 2006, 15), as a result of old entities of old media modifying themselves as per the same entities in new media, owing to the purposes for which new media is used (10). Over and above, media convergence is not only about the meeting of delivery mechanisms but also the cultures associated with those media. The objective here is to comprehend the intricate connection between corporate media (top-down) and participatory culture (Hills 107). Such a conceptualisation takes participation as a crucial element of the delivery mechanism in new media and steers clear of any claims about participation being illusionary.

The end of the "one-to-one" function of media does not mean that participation in multiple things at once on digital media is insincere. Claims such as these possibly stem from two beliefs. Firstly, experiencing multiple things at once is inherently wrong. But it can be argued that in digital media, while the focus is spread out, it does not entirely carry forward imprints of focus in print media. And so, a direct comparison is neither possible nor recommendable. Secondly, the commercialisation of anything is a form of mind corruption. Since the promise of participation is pivotal in commercialising Web 2.0, the former is cast in the same frame as the latter. Nevertheless, the relationship shared by these two events is not so simple and direct. This calls for a thorough appropriation of participatory culture of digital media, which will also attempt to address the third question about online reading communities and reading as a social experience.

3.2.3 Web 2.0 and Participatory Culture

"Once the internet changed the world; now the world is changing the internet" (Lovink 1). Lovink's remark alludes to the developmental history of the internet. The first part of the statement refers to the internet's initial design, i.e., Web 1.0, where the internet was mostly used as an informational medium; and the second part hints at the effects of Web 2.0's participatory design, where internet is used as a medium for communication. Web 2.0 is different from Web 1.0 in that it incorporates a social component where users create and distribute material, frequently with the ability to share and reuse.[75] A good example of medium

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[75] Web 2.0 is an attitude rather than a technology. Web 2.0 doesn't, in the opinion of its proponents, allude to any modifications to the internet's design. Instead, it refers to changes in user practices and the types of software used.

for communication under Web 2.0 is social networking websites and social media platforms—like YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and Instagram—where users do not go only to acquire information, i.e., they are not merely receivers or consumers, but become producers themselves.[76] These can be seen as direct sites of audience/user participation (see fig. 3.5).

Jenkins, Puroshotma, Clinton, Weigel, & Robison (2009) succinctly explicate the apparatus that constitutes participatory culture. They define participatory culture as "a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing one's creations, and some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices." They make a distinct case of participatory culture by adding that it is a culture where "members believe their contributions matter and feel some degree of social connection with one another" (Jenkins et. al. 2009, 5). Thus, Web 2.0 models have been frequently referred to as "P2P" (Peer to Peer) or "All for All" media models that reflect a participatory culture with the possibility of formation of virtual communities. This shift is exemplified in Paul Levinson's 1999 *Digital McLuhan,* as interactivity is the feature that leads the audiences to become participants from mere "voyeurs" (65-79), and in Hugh Mackay's idea of participatory consumption as an "activity with its own practices, tempo, significance, and determination" (Creeber 2009, 19) (Mackay 1997, 3-4).

Although the term "Web 2.0" is frequently linked with internet entrepreneur Tim O'Reilly, it was coined in 1999 by Darcy DiNucci to describe a new kind of "fragmentation" that would come about with the rise of mobile web devices (Hinton and Hjorth 16). Also refer to Tim O'Reilly's "What Is Web 2.0" (2007) for a detailed account of the features of Web 2.0.

[76] Alex Bruns (2016) coined two terms, "Prosumption" and "Produsage" to describe the participatory culture in new media. "Prosumer" is a consumer who plays a prominent role in customising and personalising the product; and "produser" is a producer plus an active user, audiences as media producers.
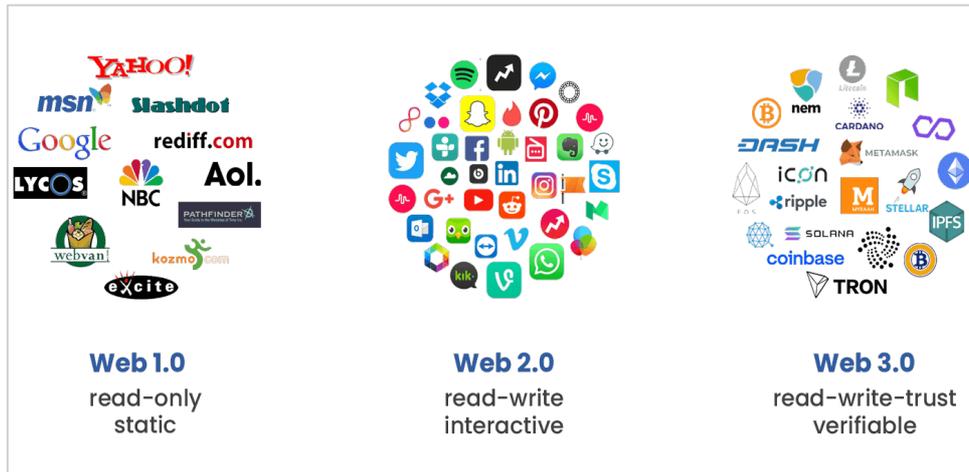
Fig. 3. 5 Digital media under different web designs: Web 1.0, Web 2.0, and Web 3.0 ("The History of The Web")

Anna Munster and Andrew Murphie (2009) list out some Web 2.0 things to do, such as "apping, blogging, mapping, mashing, geocaching, tagging, searching, shopping, sharing, socialising, and wikkiing." This list of activities suggests how Web 2.0 designs encourage and coincide with the functionality of mobile media. It is for this reason that growing use of mobile media has led to the success of the participatory model of Web 2.0 (apart from its design), suggests Hills (2009). What is it then that mobile media does to make this happen? How has mobile media contributed to the success of participatory culture? There are two ways to look at this: first, by tracking how far one can carry their mobile device, and second, by following how far a mobile device carries an individual.

The first case conveys the constant availability and accessibility of mobile media, since people can take their devices wherever they go. This results in mobile media being "always on" or "forever active" (Hills 109). So, for example, even at work, one can use their device to browse the web and participate in the world of the internet without having to completely retire from their work. Hills notes that the second case predicts a certain "private mobilisation" (111). Mobile devices provide mobility outside the "home," which makes people mobile without really moving and losing their private space. This can be noted in the success of online activist movements, which work because one does not have to physically be present; one can choose to subscribe to an ideology and promote it on their own in their online world. These two movements have decisively impacted online participatory culture directly and indirectly: directly by availing of the privileges of the platform that is always available, and indirectly by influencing the perception of digital text, which then has implications for the kind of

participation digital media allows. Subsequently, the question of the difference between the participatory culture of mass media and that of digital/new media must be addressed.

Participation is not a new notion; the mass media has too capitalised on it. But Jenkins points out that digital media (that agrees with the logic of new media) performs democratically where participation is concerned (Jenkins 2006, 244). He explains that participatory culture in mass media was limited and did not hold the power to change the core workings of the delivery mechanism of the medium. For instance, television and radio channels (informed by their own agendas) demanded audience involvement in the same format as prefixed in accordance with the channel's aims. Whereas participation in digital media (including social media) holds power to alter the workings of the medium in different capacities. It can change the way media is used and the way its content is read. For instance, many improvisations were made in the interface of social media sites as a way of adapting to the form of participation on these sites[77]; Instagram added a *Reels* feature in 2020, while Facebook introduced *Stories*, and YouTube introduced *Shorts*.

Nevertheless, gullibility towards a convinced participatory paradise must also be avoided, as Lovink notes that prevalent power structures do get reinforced through these media. But again, he also insists on investigating the "slippery nexus"—the point of negotiation—between the worlds of controlled media flow and the worlds where control is diffused (3). The structure of the participatory model attests to how control is checked. Matt Hills depicts this structure through the estimation of the *where*, *what*, and *who* of participation in digital media. The *where* indicates where the content appears; it specifies which platform is used to make the content accessible. The platform where content is put is decided by the kind of content and its substance—the *what* in the model. Furthermore, how the substance of content is manoeuvred (used and created) according to the platform, and why a platform is chosen for a particular type of content, both establish the user's identity—the *who*. However standardised, these categories are neither stable nor fixed. Any content can be experimented with on a different platform by diverse agents than usually expected. Extending the example used above, it is fair to note how YouTube *Shorts* and Instagram *Reels* have come about as a new breed of TikTok mini videos. TikTok video makers or "TikTokers," were previously judged as creators of poor-quality

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[77] Another reason for the noticeable effects of participation in social media is quicker improvisations and adaptability of social media as compared to mass media. It is quicker because the impact of participation intensifies with a widespread involvement of people, which is a result of low cost and easy accessibility of mobile technology that supports social media.

content, but now popular marketing companies and influencers have been using *Reels* on Instagram, free of judgement, for a wider reach.

3.2.4 Participation in Social Media and Social Media Art

> It seems that there is no part of networked thought, activity or life that is not now Web 2.0… Anything can become or be 2.0 as long as it demonstrates or is affiliated with a certain set of qualities. A list of typical Qualities 2.0 might look something like this: dynamic, participatory, engaged, interoperable, user-centred, open, collectively intelligent and so on (Munster and Murphie 2009).

Web 2.0, as discussed in the previous section, is multifarious in its functioning. On the one hand, there are business interests that attempt to commercialise the internet with mechanised control, and on the other hand, participatory cultures manage to break free from these equations of control. Then there are business strategies that try to align with people's actual use of the internet, transitioning into business models that cater to users' specific needs. These induce a site of contestation between empowerment and exploitation,[78] which, in turn, insinuates a situation of controlled freedom. The paradox of controlled freedom represents a discord that fabricates the very core of social media.

On social media, this discord coordinates with the interpenetration of the logics of sociability and mediation, transforming the definitions of both 'social' and 'media' (Hinton and Hjorth 2-3). Social media derives from the convention of offline social engagement and casts a form of mediated social intimacy, creating "networked publics"—public groupings organised by the logic of computer networks (boyd 2011). This tension between online and offline modes points towards distinct formations and associations of social interaction.

If one speaks of social interaction in terms of participation on social media, a broader perspective on the nature of participation is a prerequisite. Breaking the myth of effective online interactivity, José Van Dijck and David Nieborg observe that most online users are "inactives" and only a few are "actual creators" of user generated content, and that consumptive behaviour continues even in the environment of mass creativity. They draw a clear line between active-seeming passive involvement, such as "just clicking," and active engagement like "blogging and uploading videos." According to them, replacing the terms "audience" or "consumer" with

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[78] Sam Hinton and Larissa Hjorth also note how Web 2.0 supports "a new model of media production (and consumption) that does away with the domination of production by a few… [but also] threatens control and colonisation of users' social lives" (20).

a common denotation of "user" misleads conceptions around active-seeming and actually active users.

Moreover, participation is also assessed by scaling interactive activities into a hierarchical spectrum, which is represented through the pyramid of participation. This pyramid is structured on a principle that requires the number of individuals to be inversely proportional to the amount of dedication (in terms of skills, resources, and passion) it takes to participate. So, at the bottom of the pyramid is a large population that does not actively produce, instead, it only draws on the content built by the community. These individuals do not contribute with respect to creating anything new, and so they are called "lurkers" (Jenkins et. al. 2013, 156).

Hinton and Hjorth propose a new perspective. They insist that "every time we participate, we partake in various forms of labour sharing—from creative and social to emotional and affective labour" (55). And therefore, while these are different kinds of participatory contributions, they cannot be subjected to a hierarchy. Further, participation is a culture or group specific notion. Some cultures consider participation strictly as a concrete expression, whereas for others, the materiality of participation can be different, where even listening is regarded as a form of participation. For this reason, "lurkers" cannot be neglected as passive consumers.

One may ask, based on this calculation, if passive consumption of old media (especially mass media) is equivalent to participatory listening/lurking on new digital media, particularly social media. There are two fundamental problems with this question: 1. the phrase "passive consumption" misinforms the way the audience receives mass media messages, and 2. the course of rudimentary conditions for participation to take place in old media and new media is diverse. To argue for the first case, Stuart Hall's contention about active reception (of television messages) can be cited. Hall professes that even if the process of encoding controls the decoding of messages, it cannot do so transparently. There are limits and possibilities that mitigate the message at each stage between production and reception. Thus, reception is neither completely dependent on production nor completely free from it. Reception is relatively autonomous, and it is a moment in itself (509).

As the second problem goes, participation exists in both old and new media, but the course their respective audiences follow is not alike. While the mass media audience participates by receiving and responding indirectly through other channels outside the medium, the new media

audience/consumers/users participate through reception, response, and micro-participation acts[79] on channels provided by and within the medium itself. Also, when one talks about participation on social media, there are more layers that cut through the simple discrimination of "active producers" and "passive lurkers." Therefore, even though "lurking" seems closely similar to old media consumption, it would be fallacious to place them under the same heading.

Jenkins, Green, and Ford too address the issue of dismissal for "lurking." They assert its significance by remarking on its behavioural value and highlighting the aspect of agency. To them, beyond what is being strictly defined as "production," audiences contribute significantly. Some of these activities designated as "less active" include considerable labour that may be valuable in both commercial and non-commercial contexts. And so, one must not run the danger of reducing other forms of involvement, such as "the evaluation, appraisal, critique, and recirculation of material," to consumptive behaviour by promoting DIY media production as the pinnacle of participatory culture (Jenkins et. al. 2013, 154).

Concerning the aspect of agency, they believe that "activity" and "passivity" are not absolute descriptors of any individual; a person who "productively" reacts to one cause or field of content may be a "passive" viewer for many other causes. Reasonably, everyone has a domain in which they feel free to use their agency, and outside of that domain, most individuals are creative only in extremely specific situations (Jenkins et. al. 2013, 155-157). Moreover, they view the audience in a participatory culture as networked publics, an agentic mass. "Publics" does not merely represent numbers but form a legitimate body of people who act and behave with agency and are backed by the logic of a community.

With this background, the present section seeks to understand how art is experienced in the social media environment, i.e., how controlled and free logics of participatory culture on social media platforms accommodate art experiences. However, for this, prioritising one fundamental question is necessary: "Is social media art the same as 'art on social media'?"

Probable conclusions can be arrived at by negotiating the history of social media art with its characteristics, both of which are delineated by An Xiao Mina in her online article series

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[79] Here, actions such as *Like*, *Comment*, *Share* and *Save* at the level of an individual user have been referred to as "micro-participation" acts. These actions further contribute to assessing their collective effects and politics within the medium as well as across new media platforms.

"Always Social."[80] In Mina's opinion, social media art cannot be the same as "art on social media." For her, the first rule of thumb to define social media art is that the web must be central to all three facets—marketing, sourcing, and expression—of the artwork. She professes that "there's a small but important semantic difference between art on Twitter and Twitter art. The former suggests the traditions of art moved into Twitter, while the latter suggests art in which Twitter is seamlessly integrated" (2010). Ironically, while claiming this, she also takes note of Ranjit Bhatnagar's sonnet on Twitter as one of the initial attempts at social media art. Since sonnet is a traditional form of poetry that does not integrate the web into its composition, it should not be referred to as social media art at all. The reason why it deserves a mention in the history of social media art is because Bhatnagar utilises web networks for its dissemination, and its audience too receives the sonnet in those particular circumstances that affect their reading experience.

Hence, it is the circumstantial experience of art that brings both social media art and "art on social media" into the same bracket, even though they are two separate categories. They are distinct with regards to their existence prior to online appearance—art on social media bears presence in offline spaces before it is presented on social media, and social media art is art that is exclusively produced for and presented on social media. But the shared awareness of social media draws their experiencing protocols in a bordering likeness.

Another counterargument against this theory of equating the categories can be made on the basis of presence/absence of aura. If one takes to believe, in case of "art on social media", that offline art holds an aura, which it then carries on online platforms,[81] then such an argument can prove the distinctness of social media art by bringing up its characteristic feature of spreadability, leading to loss of aura. However, any such formulations are unsound, as Walter Benjamin's theory of mechanical reproduction and John Berger's demystification of art suggest. While Benjamin notes that the "aura" of a piece of art is reduced when it is reproduced and commodified, Berger discusses the ways in which meaning and value of art change with changing context. So, "art on social media" will be experienced in the same way as social media art; both will lose aura and gain a new meaning and position on social media.

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[80] Mina takes under review the period between 2004 to 2010 and beyond to sketch the story of social media art. See hyperallergic.com/6644/social-media-art-pt-1/, hyperallergic.com/6700/social-media-art-pt-2/, and hyperallergic.com/6648/social-media-art-pt-3/ for all the three articles under the series.

[81] For instance, when Da Vinci's painting *Mona Lisa* is posted/uploaded by a user on Facebook or Instagram.

Mina further defines social media art, with her second rule of thumb, as art that requires audience involvement since the medium it is presented on is social. Yet she fails to describe in detail what kind of involvement she wishes to mean in this context because, as described above, participation and involvement can be of varied kinds. Mina herself takes note of London-based popular contemporary artist Yoko Ono on Twitter, whose tweets look more like broadcast than interactive. Twitter and net.art[82] aside, different social media platforms like Facebook, Tumblr, Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube are governed by different logics of audience participation, and each of these participations cannot be considered to be any less because medium affordances cannot be thought of as impairments to participation. To add to this confusion, it is worthy to mention that "art on social media" too receives participation; individual users involve themselves in recreating traditional art in different ways using the tools provided by the medium. Surely, then, the boundaries between the categories in question should be challenged.

Closely connected with this uncertainty pertaining to audience involvement is the fourth rule, which states the importance of an artist's intention. If the critique of social media art depends on the artist's intent as a paramount parameter, then the audience's intrusion in interactively recreating art and altering it becomes problematic—both cannot coexist. On the one hand, Mina imagines social media as a space where distinction between audience and artist is blurred, and on the other, she concretises these differences by emphasising the artist's intention.

Although the third rule encourages that art must seem approachable to audiences that do not belong to the "typical art world," it still maintains the division between the specialist artist community and the untrained audience. Unhindered accessibility and interactivity are promoted, but the quality of art is kept in check too, as Mina notes that art must be conceptually rich. Whereas, in practice, social media tries inevitably to resolve this discrimination by extending experiences that are shared.[83] Accordingly, art too on social media is rather seen as a community artefact because shared experiences permeate its production and reception processes. And it is this move that has made social media art a household affair. Many times artists/content creators/content artists endeavour to connect with the audience, may it be through themes or styles of art. Mina notes in this context that

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[82] Net.art was an early social networking site (SNS) to share art online.

[83] Jenkins notes that the biggest change from consumption in old media to participation in new media is the shift from "individualised and personalised media consumption" towards "consumption as a networked practice" (2006, 244).

Recently, more and more artists using social media have placed their art as much in online space as in physical space, presenting a vision of social media art more closely aligned with how we use mainstream social media in general—as an extension of our lives, rather than a separate practice. And interestingly, more social media artists today are surrendering a portion of their creative will to the whims of the crowd, making their practices significantly more social.

Two very important points come about from Mina's observation. Firstly, since social media is becoming an extension of human lives, social media participation, more and more, involves the "everyday," i.e., the daily ordinariness. Art, too, orients itself around the activities and thoughts one experiences during the course of a regular workday. There is an honest effort to make art resonate thematically and/or stylistically. Secondly, the dependence of experience upon the context, i.e., art's situatedness on social media, also makes the audience think of that particular artwork as oriented with their day-to-day activity (even if it is not made to appear that way as a conscious choice). Of course, once the artwork is taken out of context, it would mean something different. These two points lie at the heart of the concept of "vernacular creativity," which engages with both art practices and mass culture simultaneously by "reproducing, mimicking, and borrowing techniques," making creativity an everyday thing (Burgess 35). In the pool of existing social media platforms, Instagram stands as an unmatched exemplar of this "vernacular creativity."[84]

Kevin Systrom admits in an interview that with check-in applications getting a wider response from users, the founders of Instagram (i.e. Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger) had originally ideated about devising a similar platform. However, noticing people's inclination towards domestic photography, owing to improving phone camera technology, they chose to build "Instagram" (which stands for Instant + Telegram) as an application that allows users to instantly share their "here and now(s)", or share the moments they believe are noteworthy enough for the world around them to see (SXSW 2019, 00:03:22). Instagram's polaroid camera icon also reflects the basic message of the platform: capturing the quotidian, adding individualised captions/notes and making photography a personal affair, and lastly, minimising the time between clicking a picture and posting it for everyone to view it.[85] So, initially after

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[84] Lev Manovich notes that Twitter is generally used for exchanging news and links, Facebook for social communication, Flickr for archiving high quality images, [and] Instagram for "aesthetic visual communication" (41).

[85] A 2014 study which examined 5.6 million Instagram images concluded that Flickr is used to share pictures with high quality whereas Instagram is used to share "everyday activity pictures captured by smart phones" (Manikonda, Lydia, et al. 2014)

Instagram's launch in 2010, many users shared moments of their ordinary lives through photographs, as was the purpose of the platform. More and more users were enticed to share their vision through the medium of photography on Instagram and receive a real time response from their followers and other audiences.

Over and above its vernacularity, Instagram also bears significance in terms of creativity on social media. With Instagram becoming a household name, photography as a creative practice grew out of the hands of a few artists and opened up to a million users who now had a platform to express their *visual voice*. Perhaps unnoticed, the contribution of Instagram's stylised image *Filters*, along with many other factors, in making Instagram known specifically for aesthetic representations cannot be overlooked. Other factors, like Instagram's user interface promoting visual creativity, are also worthy of a mention here, as they may have resulted in attracting creative posts from artists and users alike. Gradually, almost all art forms (under literature, performing arts, and fine arts), materiality of which could be accommodated by the 'image' and 'video' format of Instagram, shared on the platform were received with stirring participation from its users. And that is how Instagram surfaced as an aesthetic medium—a medium that provides space to share art and has a significant effect on how it is exhibited, represented, and received.

Thus, even though it began as a photo sharing application for mobile phones to encourage people to share their day-to-day activities via photography, today it is also a gallery for many artists to share their work with millions of people. Nonetheless, experience of art and creativity on Instagram follows the platform's overall logic and is, therefore, distinct from other social media platforms. In order to investigate further this experience of art on Instagram and the aesthetic experience afforded by Instagram art, a closely accurate estimation of the aesthetic field around Instagram—a social media platform that quintessentially stands for its "instant" participatory communication—will be attempted in the upcoming section.

3.3 Instagram Art and its Aesthetic Field

On October 6, 2010, Instagram was officially released as an iPhone app in the Apple App Store. It featured *shareable*, *instant* photography within a square frame (photos could not be loaded from the phone's gallery), a number of stylised *Filters* to render the pictures with unique visuality, and the option for *Followers* to *Like* or *Comment* on the pictures. At that point, however, one could have hardly predicted that Instagram's three foundational pillars:

photography, instantaneity, and sociability—would change the face of *visual aesthetics*, *reading activity*, and s*ocial interactivity* forever. And yet, accounting for this change is only skimming the surface. Instagram's logic has not only individually affected these, but with time, their inter-relationality has also reconstructed them.

Initially a photo-sharing app, Instagram has come to mean differently to its different users, where the purpose of usage defines its meaning for the user: some use it to share, some only to view, some to connect informally, some to exchange information, some to entertain, and some to get entertained. These purposes always co-exist in a variety of combinations, which means the semantic substance of experience is not always uniform. This demarcates art experiences on Instagram from print/traditional platforms. Lachlan MacDowall and Kylie Budge (2022) have noted that

> The use of Instagram by artists, art enthusiasts and the art curious alters the view point away from the officially ordained or designed experience of such spaces and their owners or those who orchestrate them, allowing for a response that is entirely outside this world. With the rise of digital technologies via the internet, Web 2.0 and social media in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and especially since 2010 with the birth of Instagram, things have changed. Sophisticated mobile phone cameras and internet coverage have become omnipresent, and so has the visually oriented, aesthetically pleasing and user-friendly social media platform Instagram. The tables of art engagement and even representation have been considerably upended. (4)

Apart from these, there are other concerns that also play a significant role in shaping the Instagram experience. For instance, in the wake of the commercialisation of the platform after its initial phase (2010-2012), promotion of only certain kinds of posts has called into question democracy, on the basis of which the platform apparently advertises itself. Further, reorientation of Instagram towards shrewd *commercialisation* can be explained through the *consumption culture* of social media, which is a concern in itself. Commercialisation and consumption culture are closely connected, but it is not clear which is the result of which; they point towards each other in an endless loop.[86] MacDowall and Budge state that "consumption" is at the heart of Instagram culture and Instagram design of *Home Feed* itself nurtures the attitude to "consume" more and more. It suggests "an appetite to devour images" that results in engagement that is more addictive than immersive (2). Therefore, as crucial as audience

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[86] Jodie Cook marks that the platform's fundamental idea and structure are still intact, where every change made to Instagram furthers its objective of encouraging users, influencers, and marketers to use the platform regularly (2020).

perception is, the larger context of the medium (including its indicative designs and objectives) is also necessary to understand the art experience on the medium.

Again, since Instagram is a networked space, the rationale of "networked individualism" (individual participation in a networked space) recommended by Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Ito, and danah boyd is also at work here. Following the concept of collective intelligence, they believe that social media is not only used in individualistic ways but also harbours a shared culture, practice, and purpose that does not always adhere to the predefined objectives of the platform (Jenkins et al. 2016, 28-31). Networked individualism, then, "is a balance between the individual and the community, between 'personalization' and 'socialization' which can be difficult in practice but which represents a meaningful set of goals to work towards within any given group" (Jenkins et al. 2016, 30).

Finally, one may deduce that Instagram art experience is conditioned by threefold logics of media, individual and community. Consequently, this section attempts to locate these within the larger context of factors affecting an aesthetic field, explained by Arnold Berleant, where: 1. *Media* aspects that take into account the user interface, platform design, and digital tools make for the material sources and technology level; 2. *Individual* aspects that consider reading and perception on an individual level will be the base of psychological factors; and 3. *Community* aspects that point to Instagram's sociality as a common denominator in the participatory culture of Instagram's networked space can be read under socio-cultural factors. (see fig. 3.4)

3.3.1 Media and Material Source

Art on Instagram, evidently, is not native to the platform. Almost all forms of art that are in currency today on Instagram have existed outside of it. They are only present in the digital realm; the latter is not their whole and sole mode of existence. These art forms, when they appear on Instagram, go through the process of remediation. And when they do so, they take advantage of the affordances of the platform and are translated into this new medium of Instagram. Art remediates in consonance with the platform's infrastructure, which is represented through the *media* aspect here. As mentioned above, media stands for platform's material conditions that can accommodate formalistic features of art within the representational possibilities of the platform. Here are some tools and designs[87] that define this infrastructure:

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[87] The list is not exhaustive, it only includes some highlight features to put the case in point.

- Image Oriented *Posts* and *Grid*

Instagram primarily promotes visual communication, and so image-oriented posts, unlike Facebook and Twitter, are quite obviously expected. However, Instagram *Grid* is something that was not intended to be a spectacle in itself, yet users have eventually come to work on it. When visualising *Grid*, one may imagine an artwork divided into multiple posts and presented in an order that appears aligned as a whole. *Captions* can then be used to describe each part of the *Grid* individually, making an image a standalone picture while also being part of a larger frame. Here are some examples of creative use of the *Grid*. This traffic of visual treat may also occasion building kaleidoscopic narratives for the audience (see fig. 3.6 and 3.7).[88]
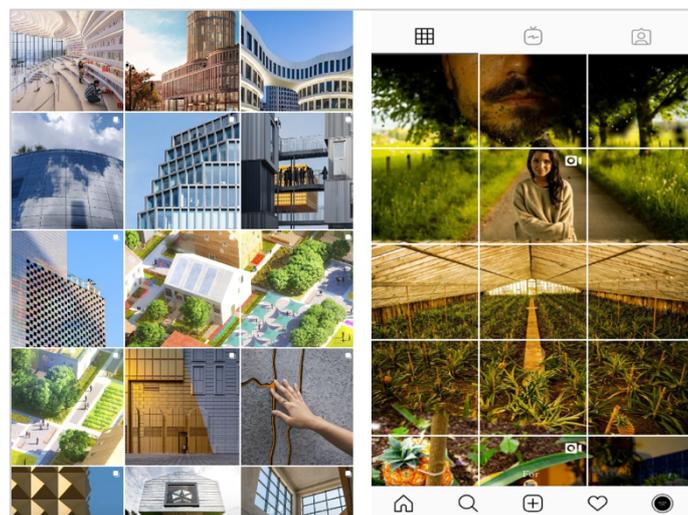

Fig. 3. 6 Elements from different images flow into each other and establish a language of their own through the use of *Grid* (Left - *Grid* from @mvrdv on Instagram, Right - *Grid* curated by @gonrodrigues on Reddit)

[88] Due to insufficient information provided by the sources of these images (in fig. 3.6 and 3.7), the researcher has not been able to cite them from the profile of authors/owners on Instagram. Rather the secondary sources that have employed them in their online articles and blogs have been cited.

Fig. 3. 7 Minute everyday details stitched together through the use of *Grid* (Left - design curated by Brett Perry, Right - *Grid* from Cassey McPerry's Instagram *Feed*)

Apart from this, the *Grid* is also used for practical purposes. For instance, Instagram originally restricted the image posts to a square sized (1:1) aspect ratio, which could not accommodate portrait and landscape images of different aspect ratios. *Grid* can prove useful here. One only needs to divide the image into separate portions of square frames and then post these unit-images in the required order.

- *Captions*

Describing posts with witty and quirky *Captions* has been commonplace among Instagram users, so much so that there are websites actually dedicated to suggesting *Captions* for pictures and videos shared on the platform. *Captions* help to add notes and additional information to describe or accentuate an image /video. In a way, they also contribute to further personalising a post. As for art posts, *Captions* are used to bring together references to various artworks, adding to the aesthetic experience; they are also used as an extension to the post, an explanation. In the case of poetry on Instagram, the image posts mostly have a highlight from the poem and the rest of the poem follows in the *Caption*. Another instance, in this respect, can be taken from @theartidote on Instagram that features an artwork in the image post and a related piece of poetry as a *Caption* (see fig. 3.8). These artworks have also been modified as a *Reel* with moving images with the subtitle feature recently made available on the platform.

Fig. 3. 8 Artworks featured with prose/poetry in *Captions* posted by @theartidote on Instagram (13 Mar. 2023)

- *Video and IGTV*

In June 2013, a video feature was added to Instagram, where videos not exceeding 15 seconds could be posted. Eventually, this limit was pushed to encourage longer videos and shorter short films, and they were saved as IGTV (Instagram TV) posts. This is where one may see the beginnings of art posts related to performing arts like music, dance, poetry, and so on. Burgeoning popularity of these videos, along with TikTok and YouTube videos, served as evidence of how users were responding actively to information through audio-visual modes. Nowadays, Instagram *Reels*, being more accessible than videos, are mushrooming more than ever.

- Instagram *Reels*

Following the bewildered reputation of short, fun videos on TikTok, Instagram announced *Reels* as "a new way to create and discover short, entertaining videos on Instagram" ("Introducing Instagram Reels"). Ever since this new creative tool was launched, Instagram has been promoting its viewership to the extent that a separate explore segment (apart from the usual image/video post) is allotted to *Reels* on the Instagram user interface. Pointing out the addictive engagement of *Reels*, Vanessa Dueck calls them "connection porn"

> in that it feels that it gives out some form of desired thing: relational intimacy, without the actual thing occurring. (Oftentimes, the person speaking seems to be looking directly at you. Or painting just for you. Or dancing just for you. Or having a moment of connection with another person that touches your heart and makes you feel connected) And people keep going

back for more even when they swore to themselves they wouldn't...Our brains love reward, and scrolling until we find a nice, easily digestible 10—15 second video clip gives our brains a hit of dopamine.

Since it is so convenient to swipe up to jump on the next one, *Reels* are devised in a way to first grab the attention of the audience and then sustain it to make them watch the whole *Reel*. To seek attention, content and video creators use similar apparatus employed in a clickbait. Yet there is ever a hope for prospective creativity springing from and winding its way around the restrictive format of a *Reel*. Such crafty creativity is a mark of content artists, film makers, and video creators on Instagram, all alike.[89] Another instance of inventive use of platform design is *Carousel* post.

- *Carousel*

A string of multiple images and/or videos (up to ten frames) in one post is known as a *Carousel* post. It is generally used by businesses to attract engagement on their posts advertising their products or services. It may be successful in doing so up to a certain extent since it is more convenient to swipe to and fro in order to familiarise oneself with the content of the post rather than visiting the business's profile and browsing through different posts for the same information. It is time saving for the audience and inspires creative ways of composing a *carousel* post for the creators.

Carousels also offer artists a variety of possibilities. *Carousels* allow image and video slides to exist together in a single post, so complementary artworks of different modalities can be presented at once to enhance the experience. Firstly, because *Carousels* allow movement in image/video series, they can be used as an innovative storytelling design to indicate a certain continuity in text and/or graphic based narratives such as those found on the Instagram *Profile* @8bitfiction. Secondly, the first slide in *Carousel* often reflects the relevance of the post. For instance, if the first image declares a particular theme in which the following content is set, the audience may choose to act accordingly, depending on their interest in the theme. The first slide is also used to attract the audience towards the content with captivating text and/or images. This is a major marketing move, but artists and content creators also use these techniques to appropriate their audiences. What may this mean for an audience? It is possible that the first slide may influence the way the following slides are read. Another instance of *Carousel* art

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[89] A good illustration of content artist's work can be exemplified in the following post on @dubdub.ai: www.instagram.com/p/Cxu-P6uIHZ4/

post is illustrated in the following figure where the poet presents four slides: the first slide with the title, the next two consisting of previously written poems (serving as a point of reference), followed by the fourth with her own poem on the same theme.
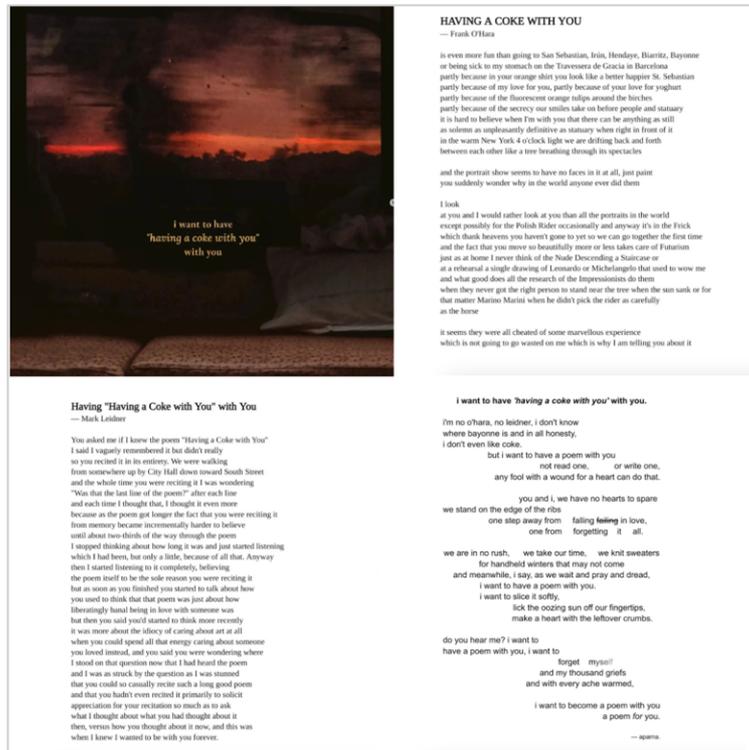

Fig. 3. 9 Aparna Nair's "I want to have 'having a coke with you' with you"

The unifying factor among the success stories of all these tools and design choices is how meticulously they have worked around the visual aspects. This represents, Elisa Serafinelli observes, "the foundation of a new mobile visualities aesthetic" (8). Instagram fulfils the criteria of being an accessible platform, but through its emphasis on visual content,[90] it also necessitates distinguishing itself in order to be noticeable as a unique platform. The three possibilities for any post symptomatic of new mobile visualities aesthetic on Instagram are: 1. repetitious use of the recommended hacks, up to the point of saturation, to make an image or a

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[90] Naturally, Instagram's design preferences work by the principle of maximum utilisation of the platform, to attain which accessibility and appearance are prioritised. For example, the choice of square framed posts makes sure that it looks visually satisfying (i.e. not too huge and gaudy) on a mobile phone screen. The design not only distinguishes Instagram from other platforms, but also causes addiction to scrolling, boosting the usage of the platform. In this regard, a 2018 study by K. Kircaburun and M D Griffiths observes that Instagram *Feed* is carefully designed to look like a "near-frictionless stream and to show a sliver of the next image, generating the impression of an endless train of images..." (MacDowall and Budge 2).

video attractive,[91] 2. gratuitous over-aestheticisation of the experience by overplaying the visuals, and 3. ingenious use of visuals resulting in a new perspective altogether.

An effect that does not stem directly from aestheticisation, rather gets culminated into a circumstantial experience through the use of aesthetic *Filters*, is simulation.[92] Instagram is about recording memories, but simulating artefacts like *Filters* help engender a manipulated aesthetic into a memory, recreating it. These filmic aids on Instagram help users fulfil their need to capture a moment and reshape it in the way that they idealise the moment to be. What emanates from this instance is the event of making moments look and feel "Instagrammy" by actively creating momentarily pleasing experiences, on which the metaphorical filter of Instagram is always already applied. This moment is where the user is captured temporarily and is then released instantly from it as he/she chooses to scroll on.

The logic of ephemeral experience seeps through art posts as well. The aesthetic experience is heightened for a moment through visual or audio-visual stimulus, and then it is dropped in the act of moving to the next post in the *Feed* (because Instagram is essentially a moving platform—subjected to be used for engaging with not one post but many). In other words, the so called "instant rapture" is putatively brief because it is experienced on a platform designated to deliver experiences that are more than one in number and type. However short-lived, such experiences are not evanescent. Eventually, with prolonged exposure to the platform's dynamics, user imbibes this plying pleasure to the extent that their response starts working independently of the logic of amplified stimulus. As a result, even those art posts that do not have attractive visuals or auditory impetus are paradoxically received paradoxically with the same rigour and urge to withdraw. This is quite evident when the engagement received on poetry posts branded as "Instapoetry" and that on posts of traditionally published poetry on Instagram are compared. Here, only the preferences of different audience groups mutually disagree with one another, while there is little to no difference in their reading behaviours (in most cases)[93]. By this, then, any art on Instagram is Instagram art.

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[91] Lev Manovich lists down the typical features and strategies of photos on Instagram as follows: "Increased brightness; Increased contrast; Increased saturation, or its opposite, Decreased saturation to create almost a monochrome photo; large proportion of light areas, and small proportion of dark areas; White backgrounds; 'Negative space', (large empty monochrome areas), with no gradations or details. Detailed and texture parts confined to clearly differentiated parts of an image juxtaposed with other empty parts; Compositions arranged around diagonal rather than vertical and horizontal lines..." (102)

[92] Refer to the second chapter on "Aesthetics" from the book *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures* by Tama Leaver, Tim Highfield, and Crystal Abidin, where they talk about simulation and aesthetic effects in Instagram visual culture.

[93] Please refer to the quantitative analysis of Instagram poetry engagement in the next chapter.

3.3.2 Individual and Psychological Factors

If the general nature of art experience can be explained by the *media* aspect, individual experiences can be tapped by understanding the psychological state that goes into constructing these experiences. On a more specific scale, underlying factors like purpose of use and interest in focus define an individual's approach and attitude. Accordingly, MacDowall and Budge have further classified audiences into broad categories of *Exploring* audience, *Affiliated* audience, *Thematic* audience, Chatterbox audience, *FOMO* audience, etc. (68-69). More important is to acknowledge that, as much as one may attempt, it is not possible to reach a solitary homogenous set of ideal or stable audiences; audiences are all distracted, relying on what interests them and what does not, when, and when not. These are domains where even the minutest of differences prompt a unique experience of its own. And therefore, it is not viable to list down each one of these combinations, leading up to an array of psychological states that construct countless individual experiences. All that can be instituted is an estimation of conditions determining psychological disposition. The present research identifies decisive conditions, namely, physical, logistical, and mental.

Physical circumstances—surrounding environment in which the individual is situated, i.e., Instagram *Feed* posts preceding and succeeding the art post while scrolling, and so on—have an effect on the art experience, however negligible. Logistical conditions refer to the way in which Instagram dispenses content to its users. The famous Instagram *Algorithm*[94] can be a good example of this. In June 2016, Instagram *Feed* shifted from a chronological to an algorithmic view. Algorithmic *Feed* operates on the principle of familiar and similar content to personalise user experience. Familiar content is content from known artists and creators. Similar content is new content (which often comes from sponsored posts) related to what is usually preferred by the user in past viewings. According to a recent update in 2023, ranking on the *Feed* depends not only on the number of *Likes* and *Saves,* but also on the number of *Views*. High number of *Shares* and *Comments* means increase in *Views*. Greater the number of *Views,* the more time is spent on the app/website. However pleasant and satisfying, familiar, and similar content of art cannot be experienced in the same way each time the user comes across such posts on the platform.

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[94] There is no one algorithm by which Instagram ranks the post on the *Feed*. Adam Mosseri clarifies how the platform uses "a variety of algorithms, classifiers, and processes, each with its own purpose" (2023).

Mental processes like perception and cognition also play a significant role in deciding how brains register an art experience in the current technological context. In this light, it should be noted how stream of images seems to be replacing the explanatory power that text formerly possessed over visuals, and even in *Comments*, emojis have replaced letters as the primary language, indicating a hold of the visual form in online communications (MacDowall and Budge 14). Owing to this desirability of visuals, the nature of perceptivity can be said to have shifted too. Some believe that Instagram encourages modes of vision (like "distraction, immersion, sociality, and performance") and not modes of spectatorship (like "observation, contemplation, viewing works from single vantage points, and directed interaction") that are generally associated with the traditional ways of experiencing art (63). However, MacDowall and Budge are convinced that "distraction is not a lapse in attention but rather an effect of speed and scale on the human sensory apparatus..." (66). Moreover, users may also have diverse visual palates, which leads to idiosyncrasies in receptibility, and, in turn, in individual experiences as well.

3.3.3 Community and Socio-Cultural Factors

Social experience is at the core of Instagram, and communication design of the platform itself—*Like, Share, Comment, Follow,* and so on—intends to enhance this experience for its own good. Serafinelli explains this by pointing out that users find it "rewarding" to use Instagram, particularly when they get good feedback and *Likes* from other users. This kind of exchange resembles the experience of self-recognition in online activities, making social connection an important factor in encouraging individuals to use the platform (57). Instagram turns this human need for affinity spaces to its own advantage by promoting the formation of virtual social spheres, i.e., online communities. Here, a user is appreciated and can have a sense of belonging (as a member of a group), while the platform can use this affiliation to disseminate content in an organised manner.

On Instagram, these communities, are formed around the tenets of "gift economy"[95]— user A must actively *Like, Share, Comment*, and *Follow* the content of N users to be *Like*d, *Share*d, *Comment*ed on and *Follow*ed by those N users. By and large, this remains the protocol to receive engagement. The common interest—to give and get attention—is what brings these users into a shared body of people. And so, there is no instituted community, but rather a set of

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[95] A "gift economy", aka "gift culture", specifically on social media, refers to an implicit agreement between parties where a gesture from one entity is expected to be rewarded by another entity (immediately or in near future).

unarticulated codes of conduct that retains connections between these users. Such interactions are performed in a loop to avoid being "cut off" from the social network.

The same urge to stay connected can be observed in the act of sharing one's life updates, which is aimed at initiating conversations. Serafinelli shares this one instance of changing social relationships:

> Richard, commenting on the wide use of images on social media platforms, believes that when people share their cup of coffee, although they do it through a photographic image, their intent goes beyond the mere interest in the coffee. Instead, they are interested in the type of social interaction that sharing that image can produce.

Instagram *Stories* were introduced in August 2016 for sharing everyday activities, with a similar cause in mind. Casey Newton on *The Verge* writes that Kevin Systrom (founder of Instagram) admitted in an interview that Instagram *Stories* are developed to chronologically show visual information in a slideshow format. This unit of information is ephemeral, which makes sure that Instagram is used not only to share the best moments but all moments of one's life—"the glamorous and the mundane." *Stories* are preferred because the users do not share *their* experiences; they share *shared* experiences—the everyday experiences[96]. This makes them connect with their online community, to maintain which, they remain regularly connected to the platform as well.

Instagram is used as an extension to one's day-to-day activities, and that being the case, art on the platform becomes a customary experience. The aura associated with art is dispelled: firstly, because of the sheer frequency of experiences, and secondly, because of the vernacularity of creativity (typically observed in UGC and UCC[97]). However, absence of aura does not dissipate the aesthetic experience; it only transforms it. On Instagram, the experience of art and its appreciation follow a social logic that goes beyond the platform's physical limitations and users' subjective perceptions. Consequently, audience participation is a multilayered activity.

Stories are used by many artists to connect with their audience and establish an affiliation that goes a long way. Many times, the user audience engages more with the artist's post because the said artist responds actively and tries connecting with them on a quasi-personal note—by

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[96] Lev Manovich studies the photographic themes and concludes that most of them involve reflections of a certain everydayness (39).

[97] UGC means User Generated Content, or the widely forwarded/shared content made by some users. UCC means User Created Content, or the content that is made by the users (Hinton and Hjorth 55)

replying to their *Comments* or messages on *DM*. Extending personal gestures may not be an attempt at appeasing the audience into engagement; it can be seen as an endeavour to be relatable. The related audience may thus take such UGC art experiences more personally out of mere propinquity to the artist. Adversely, if the artist seems socially cold, his/her art posts may be treated accordingly. Thus, a certain reciprocity is always effective on social media. It also hints at the implications of the "gift economy" on social media creativity, discussed by Aarthi Vadde, who maintains that amateur UCC art is popular only because it gets endorsed by the conciliatory agreement inter-se (30-31).

Furthermore, virality of *Likes* is not incidental; it is rather played out in the act of a user performing an identity, looking to associate with a community, to consecrate his/her identity. These decisions have an impact on the art experience, whether consciously or not. Therefore, being regulated by a social space such as Instagram, art *tastes* hardly remain stable; they are always evolving.

Conclusion

Together, Instagram's visuality, temporality, and shareability only herald development and extension of the aesthetic experience. Visuality matters because, as important as it is to see what is present on the screen, it is also critical to see what is absent; absence speaks too. If the traditional spaces for art experience—galleries, books, theatres, and so on—provide audience with a dynamic aesthetic experience, then Instagram's ability to expand that experience beyond space and time only adds to its evolving nature. Also, in posting art on Instagram, the artist's attempt to create conditions for aesthetic experiences suitable for the medium reflects the social imagination. Thus, the experience of art on Instagram is anything but passive. It gives the artists the ability to employ their senses in styling the post, to engage their "chosen criteria" for aesthetics, and to make decisions and assessments (MacDowall and Budge 97-111). These considerations, in turn, affect the overall experience of art on the audience's end. Consider a typical example of experience of poetry on Instagram that Imogen Wallersteiner presents:

> I wait for a bus on a cold night and read a short-form quote or a line...This haiku-esque work: 'fall/ in love/ with your solitude'...At the bus stop, ...[it] is a welcome respite from my otherwise polluted explore page comprising mainly bikini-clad girls and gym honed bodies—frustrating content which my 'personalised' Instagram algorithm assumes I'm desperate to see. Short-form work is easily consumable and sometimes that is what we need in our tense and rushed lives, like a cup of tea or a warm hug.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that this is just one specific instance, and it would be inaccurate to draw sweeping conclusions from it. To have a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the experience of poetry on Instagram, one must also reach beyond examining merely the common components—material source, psychological factors, social-cultural factors—that make up the aesthetic field of all Instagram art. To gain a more detailed, non-generalised understanding of the aesthetic experience of Instapoetry, it is essential to examine different individual instances of how poets (artists) create and distribute their art, as well as how readers interact with poetry in their everyday lives. This will ultimately provide insight into the state of poetry on the platform.