

## Ekphrastic Poetry – The New Old Form of Poetry over the Ages Tracing the history of ekphrastic poetry

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### Abstract

There has been a growing interest in a newer form of poetry which is interdisciplinary in nature since the Twenty-First century. This new form of poetry includes favouring pastiche, trans-textual and multi-referential aspects which in turn has leading to a renewed interest in ekphrastic poetry. *Ekphrasis* is a literary device used for the detailed description of a work of visual art. Ekphrastic poetry explores art forms through words; thus, it is the verbal description of visual work of art. It gives a narrative and lens fluidity to silent and still art forms. Ekphrastic poetry has undergone various changes from olden Greek times to the new fresh twenty-first century. The historical view on the form of this poetry helps connect the dots of trends and gives a new perspective on the changes the form undergoes. Ekphrastic poetry is the old form in new avatar.

**Keywords:** Ekphrasis, Ekphrastic Poetry, Interdisciplinary, Twenty-First Century, Art

The term Ekphrastic roots from the Greek words *ek* and *phrazein*. *ek* means ‘out’ and *phrazein* means ‘to tell, declare or pronounce’. During the classical period, ekphrasis meant ‘telling in full’, ‘drawing out’ and ‘making clear’. The origins of the practice lie in classical rhetoric. Ekphrasis was one of the last exercises taught to the students of rhetoric in ancient Greece. The students were required to convey the experience of a person, a place, or an object to an audience. The challenge and purpose of the exercise was to bring out the student’s descriptive skills on experience of a being, a place, or an object to audience.

The term *ekphrastic*, as understood now, was first mentioned by the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos (556-467 BC) in Plutarch’s *De Gloria Atheniensium*. Ceos described ekphrastic poetry as “poema pictura loquens, picture poema silens,” which can roughly be translated as “painting is mute poetry and poetry is speaking picture” and this dictum of “mute painting–speaking poetry,” along with Horace’s proverbial *ut pictura poesis*, becomes the maxim of the connection between the verbal and the visual.

John Hollander defined ekphrastic as the genre of poetry – “Poems addressed to silent works of art.” (Hollander: 130) Art includes monuments, buildings or imagined works of art. Heffernan in his work proposes simple definition with complex implications: *ekphrasis is the verbal representation of visual representation*.

An ekphrastic work includes the following four things. Permeating ekphrasis from Homer onwards:

the conversion of fixed pose and gesture into narrative, the prosopopoeial invoicing of the silent image, the sense of representational friction between signifying medium and object signified, and overall, the struggle for power the Paragone between the image and the word. (Heffernan: 136)

Heffernan states that ekphrastic practice is representational because it “represents representation itself.”

Claus Cluver refines Heffernan’s definition and proposes that ‘ekphrasis is the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system.’ (Cluver: 26)

Becker treats ekphrastic as a kind of “*mise en abîme*, a miniature replica of a text embedded within that text; a textual part reduplication, reflecting, or mirroring the textual whole”.

Ekphrastic for Smith is “intertextual mimesis” where textual correspondence and coherence is significant.

Peter Verdonk defines ekphrastic as “a sub-genre of poetry addressing existent or imaginary works of art” which is an amalgamation of and communication between two sign systems. (Verdonk: 2013)

In *Twentieth-Century Poetry and the Visual Arts* (2008), Elizabeth Bergmann Loizeaux notes that originally, ekphrasis was considered a kind of description rather than specific subject matter. The early definitions of ekphrastic mention statues and paintings only as possible subjects of ekphrastic mode of descriptive writing but since the prevailing centuries it has expanded to “a much larger field of talk about images ranging from casual conversation about a film, or an image in an ad, or a photograph,” still inclusive of “the most considered analysis of a work of art” (Loizeaux: 28)

All the given definitions earlier in this work have focused on the semiotic, textual and structural factors as integral part of ekphrastic poetry. Ekphrastic poetry is the recreation of the target piece only when the target piece has artistic aesthetic value. The involvement of the writer with the target piece is indispensable. Louis Marin believes that contemplating before the piece of art produces great feelings with the interaction “between the painting and the contemplative eye”. It is important to develop a connection between the piece of art and writer. Ekphrastic poetry tends to be subjective because it is the personal take of the writer irrespective of the artist’s expression in the piece of art. Ekphrastic poetry is based on the effect art produces on the poet and the way poet takes that effect and transforms it to words. The poet has freedom to take creative and imaginative leaps to deal with the subject. John Keats in ‘Ode to Grecian Urn’ takes freedom to create a fictitious story based on the pictures found on the urn.

### 1.3 History and Development of Ekphrastic poetry till Twentieth Century

James Heffernan expresses that ekphrastic writings has been with humans for nearly three thousand years. A tradition that followed from Homer to Ovid, Milton to Romantics, W.H Auden to William Carlos Williams. Early instances of ekphrastic writings can be found in Greek rhetorical exercises called *Progymnasmata* in which students were expected to describe in detail or narrate events and talk eloquently. In 4th century AD Aphthonius in his *Progymnasmata* provides description of the temple in Alexandria.

Ekphrastic is closely related with *Energeia*, which is a vigour activity or purposeful movement. In epic poetry ekphrasis was a common device employed to describe objects and places. The shields of Achilles and Aeneas fulfils roles, respectively, in the Iliad and the Aeneid. The dispute and siege stories of Iliad figures the story of Homer's poem, while the Aeneid's conquests and triumphs foretell the future of the Rome.

In the Iliad, Homer gives an elaborate description of the shield of Achilles in nearly hundred and fifty poetic lines:

And first Hephaestus makes a great and massive shield, blazoning well, wrought emblems all across its surface, ... And he forged on the shield two noble cities filled with mortal men. With weddings and wedding feasts in one ... And he forged the Ocean River's mighty power girdling round the outmost rim of the welded indestructible shield.

(The Iliad, Book 18, lines 558–707)

Horace's *Ars Pictura* has analogies between poetry, drama, painting, music, dance and sets an early approach of ekphrastic criticism both for poets and painters. His theoretical support with the idea of *ut pictura poesis*, adds to Homer's narration putting the theory into practice. Since then ekphrastic poetry is thought to be the ideal literary way to give voice to the visual arts.

Roman Ekphrastic examples can be found in Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphosis* where objects and events are given in a detailed manner. The epic story appears to be overrun by the pictorial quality of ekphrasis. In *Metamorphoses*, as in *the Iliad* and *the Aeneid*, there is a similar elaboration of a work of art. However, in *Metamorphosis*, the represented visual object is not a piece of protective armour or a wall but a tapestry. *Metamorphosis* is a collection of didactic stories presenting the relationship between the Roman gods and the mortals.

Dante's *Divine Comedy*, offers illustrative ekphrastic passages. The noteworthy ekphrastic section in *Divine Comedy* takes place when Dante the traveller, guided by Virgil, is introduced to the marble mouldings carved within the threshold of the purgatorial gate in the Purgatory. The marble reveals the catastrophic stories about mankind and how they have been led astray by evil. The work also gives long ekphrastic verses on the Trojan War, which covers the rest of Canto X.

Geoffrey Chaucer was first English writer attributed to begin many literary activities. Ekphrastic debut in England in English language is credited to Chaucer. Although his portrayals of statues, temples, tapestry and artistic items are detailed verbal descriptions, they could only roughly be called ekphrastic because his basic reflection concentrated on the narration and not on verbalizing the visual. *The Legend of Good Women* gives descriptions on the embroidered pictures. In the *Knight's Tale*, the wall-pictures at the Venus temple are ekphrasized.

The initial rhetorical exercises of the Progymnasmata, were chiefly observed in the classical rhetorical examples from Virgil, Ariosto and Ovid. Philostratus, were adopted by many writers in Middle Ages and early Renaissance. The true genuine ekphrastic poetry developed during the pre-Renaissance period. However, during the Renaissance and afterwards, increasing numbers of ekphrastic poetry were composed with the idea of "ut pictura poesis", "as is painting so is poetry". The idea of harmony and decorum was key feature in ekphrasis

as a result descriptive passages and verses gained importance. The content usually surpassed the structure in many of the Renaissance ekphrastic poetry.

Renaissance is credited to bring the new understanding of man, universe, faith and arts. Painting during Renaissance was considered noble art. The ancient epics remained subjects of inspiration till late seventeenth century. Poetry as a literary genre was dominant over the other forms of art. Some of the noteworthy examples of ekphrastic poetry and passages are found in Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* (1593), where the heroine takes a vow of chastity in a temple decorated with images of rape. Spenser, was influenced by Virgil and Ovid's dramatic and descriptive qualities to a great extent and uses ekphrastic elements in Book 3 of *The Faerie Queene* where the walls of the Castle Joyous are adorned with tapestries depicting the story of Venus and Adonis. Shakespeare's '—'Rape of Lucrece' stands out because of the diction and context which brings a number of ekphrastic qualities that had been inherited from the ancients.

An important development in the Renaissance and the seventeenth-century poetry was the popularity of *painter poems* and emblem poems. These are essential in order to comprehend the development of ekphrastic tradition in English especially in terms of paragon relationship. For the first time in the history of ekphrasis, the verbal and the visual have the chance for physical contact on the page at the same time.

The Romantics and Victorian poets produced a notable number of ekphrastic poems. William Blake cannot be overlooked in order to understand the Romantic ekphrasis. Blake was exclusively original in his treatment of poetry within imagery and in he was equally good with the visual and the verbal. In other words, Blake symbolizes the close relationship between the word and the image of the time. He used to engrave, paint and write poems. His great poetic achievement is the *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*.

The opening of museums and private collections to public is significant for the development of ekphrastic poetry. The museums stored and protected the work which were open to public. The works of art which were stored in attics or in basement were now open to people.

Museums collected the paintings and artefacts where they were safe and not exposed to the harsh dealings of time, dust, and sun. The opening of museums gave longevity and survival to the art. The factor which was discussed during romantic period was that art lives longer than the artist was proved by the museums stocking and displaying artforms. This to a great extent has helped built up the lively Romantic spirit and this notion brought about a new dynamism to the already energised eighteenth-century England. Poets of the time paid regular visits to the museums, got inspired by the art forms and wrote poetry on it.

William Wordsworth wrote ekphrastic poem *Elegiac Stanzas*, which was based in the painting of 'Peele Castle in a Storm', 1805 (illustration 1) by Sir George Beaumont. The poem was written in the early summer of 1806 and published in Wordsworth's 1815 *Poetical Works*, *Peele Castle* and remains a representative poem which offers significant clues about Wordsworth's expression and attitude towards visual arts. The picture Wordsworth presents through the words is as concrete and visible as Beaumont's painting. Moreover, Wordsworth's imaginative picture built through words is livelier and more soothing than the actual painting because he provides every detail of the painting from the background strokes to the colour used by the painter.

Washington Allston in 1813 wrote *On the Group of the Three Angels before the Tent of Abraham, by Raffaele, in the Vatican* inspired from Raphael's painting 'Abraham and the

Angels (1518). 1819 witnessed two great ekphrastic encounters, *Ode to Grecian Urn* by John Keats on Grecian Urn at museum and *On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery* by Percy Bysshe Shelley 12 on The Head of Medusa, Anonymous, once Thought to be by Leonardo da Vinci.

Keats was inspired from a classical collection at the British Museum. The collection belonged the Elgin collection consisted of vases and marbles from ancient Greece. Keats was highly inspired by the beauty of these collectives, especially by an engraving of a Greek vase which was the part of the collection. The poem *Ode to Grecian Urn* is a merriment of the undying images on an antique urn. Neither the chasing lovers nor the trees have died away on the urn because the images are captured in time and space; this is also why the lovers can never kiss and the trees are evergreen. Considering the continuity of the deep-frozen action on the urn, the poem recalls the idea of immortality through works of art.

After his visit at Florentine Gallery, Shelley wrote his ekphrastic poem '*On the Medusa of Leonardo da Vinci*'. The poem concentrated Medusa's head and the creatures which emerged from the head. The painting gives negative vibes as the creatures painted are snakes, lizards, reptiles, and bats. The poem and the painting are analogous. The dark atmosphere of the painting indicated by dark colours used to intensify the vague and black background. A gloomy perspective has been reflected in the poem.

In Victorian Age, painters and their work secured a more central space in the art circles. Different ideas considering the aesthetic value and function of visual arts were key discussions of the age. At the heart of this shift was a breach; visual arts parted themselves from sciences, philosophy, and literature and regarded themselves as the distinctly different from other creative activities of man.

The Pre-Raphaelite movement is a vital development in ekphrastic poetry. Especially through the poetry and paintings of painter-poet D.G. Rossetti. In the span of fifty years between the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 and the foundation of Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848. Some of the well-known ekphrastic poems were written which were very different from their ancestral roots.

Robert Browning was master of *dramatic monologue* and is remembered for his intrigue psychological understanding of the narrator. It is believed that when Browning and Elizabeth Browning were on a tour to Italy, they visited many Italian galleries and *My Last Duchess*, could have been inspired by one such painting. The poem qualifies to be ekphrastic because the narrator in the poem describes the duchess to the visitor by showing the painting of the last duchess. Elizabeth Barret Browning wrote *Hiram Powers' Greek Slave* in 1886 which was inspired by 'The Greek Slave' by Hiram Powers, 1844.

Modern ekphrastic poetry contained the philosophical complexity of twentieth century which also concludes the ekphrastic poetical notions of the nineteenth century. Modernism gave life to the ekphrastic poetry. It marks a new fresh phase of the thousand-year-old literary device with the vigour and dynamism of new modern ideology.

In the first half the century witnessed and experienced the two great wars, several social disturbances, and political crunches. The twentieth-century art has been through a number of intellectual alterations, critical attitudes, philosophical conventions, and artistic deviations such as the rise of Structuralism, Psychoanalytical theorems, New Critical criticism, Post-modern fluctuation, lingua-central analytical approaches, New Historical investigations, and deconstructive shattering. Twentieth century produced finest ekphrastic poems. Ekphrastic



poetry was attempted as a new style and several collections of poems were published dedicated to the new style. William Carlos Williams's *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems*, 1962, W.H. Auden's *Musée des Beaux Arts* (Illustration 2), Rainer Maria Rilke's 'Archaic Torso of Apollo', Anne Sexton's 'The Starry Night' 1961, (Illustration 3), Marianne Moore's 'No Swan so Fine' and Robert Fogless I, *Vincent: Poems from the Pictures of Van Gogh*, 1978 remains the top contributors of the century.

In twentieth century ekphrastic poetry became authentic, liberal, multiple-voiced which was often political and cultural charged. Modern ekphrastic practitioners like Auden, Williams, and Ashbery try to get involved in the structure, meaning, and emotional suggestions of the paintings as much as possible in the museum.

Ekphrastic poetry has been till recently a prominent sub-genre of poetry. The form was fittingly experimented by the canonical poets of the twentieth century which had great influence on the twenty-first century writers. The Twentieth century writers extended their domains regarding the subject of the ekphrasis. They wrote extensively not only on the paintings but also on art forms from sculptures, monuments and bridges. A special mention for the works written on architectural structures in twentieth century. Hart Crane wrote the poem *To Brooklyn Bridge* (1930) on the Brooklyn Bridge which was opened to traffic in 1883. Three poems were written on the Vietnam Veterans War Memorial in Washington D.C. which was built in 1982. It is a giant granite wall carved with over fifty-eight thousand names listed in the chronology of death or capture.

The breath-taking advances in the power of computing and low budget telecommunications in the twenty-first has led to the new creative society. Easy access to the interactive global networks together with additional simplified use of computer has heightened the spread of cyber communities. These communities are prepared to embrace creativity, experimentation and openness to transformation. It has provided scope for growing multiplicity, a larger individual choice and new chances.

Twenty-first century internet paved ways to procure more information. The reader is exposed to quantum of knowledge which can easily be accessed at any place. The practice of writing ekphrastic which was revived in twentieth century was continued with equal interest and energy in twenty-first century. The improvement in availability of technology universally at cheaper rates made it affordable to large mass of people. Poetry and art were accessible easily either on the screen of the laptop or at the finger tips on smartphones. Van Gogh's painting becomes wallpapers of various electronic gadgets which earlier was a task to attain even a hard copy print of the painting. Internet played its part significantly in popularizing the discourse of Ekphrastic poems, anthologies, conferences and studies widespread in second decade of twenty-first century.

In 2003 Sharon Dolin publishes the work *Serious Pink* which sets new standards in twenty-first century ekphrastic poetry. It was not a poem in any collection but a book dedicated to the ekphrastic poetry. This book contains four sections where three of them sequences the short lyrics focusing on individual works of visual art by painters Richard Diebenkorn, Joan Mitchell and Howard Hodgkin. The book gives special set of notes on the relationship between the poems and the individual paintings. In 2009 group of three professors Jane Hedley, Nick Halpern and Willard Spiegelman prints 316 pages long book *In the Frame: Women's Ekphrastic Poetry from Marianne Moore to Susan Wheeler*. The book focus calls attention to the contribution women poets who have helped make an important genre of poetic writing and re-thinking ekphrastic poetry's motives and purposes.

In 2013 *Ekphrastia Gone Wild: poems inspired by art* by Rick Lupert. Ekphrastia is an anthology of ekphrastic poetry which includes poetry inspired by other works of art such as painting, film, literature and photography. The work includes poems by Nobel Prize winning poet Wislawa Szymborska along with a list of 87 poets from all over the world including writers Suzanne Lummis, Robert Wynne, Laurel Ann Bogen, Jerry Quickly, Gerald Locklin, Brendan Constantine, and many more, edited by Los Angeles poet Rick Lupert. The book encourages readers to attempt ekphrasis by cataloguing works of well-known writers.

When world is a global village. The practice of ekphrastic writing was wise spread across the globe. Japanese writers to Americans to British to Indians, there had been diverse attempts on ekphrastic poetry. Museums across the world too contributed its share for the same.

There has been a great deal of research and writing on ekphrastic poetry in America particularly. Majority of the social media campaigns for ekphrastic poems are from American cities. Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2015 prints *Ekphrasis in American Poetry: The Colonial Period to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Snadra Lee Kleppe. The book is the literary criticism available on formation and establishment of ekphrastic writing in America. The book covers the contributions of male and female poets and artists who have engaged with ekphrasis in a variety of ways at different periods in American history.

Ekphrastic poetry started becoming accepted in the circle of the main stream poetry in twenty-first century when it was treated equally with other types of poetry. It was not only recognized by the literary foundations but in some cases made its place amongst the top winners at literary festivals and literary awards. In 2015, The University of Victoria on behalf of The Malahat Review announced John Reibetanz winner for his poem *Fresco Magic*. John Reibetanz in his collection of poems, *Afloat* (2013), had a section consisting of several poems based on the photographs from Edward Burtynsky's *Three Gorges Dam Project*. In an interview with Malahat volunteer and reviewer John Stintzi, John Reibetanz commented on ekphrastic poetry being a wonderful trap where he was very willing to enter. He stated in the interview that:

“One of the motives that leads poets to attempt writing ekphrastic poems is the same one that drives other artists to adorn the walls of subway stations or parking garages with graffiti: it’s a feeling that the work as originally conceived is incomplete, from the standpoint of the interloping artist; it could benefit from the introduction of an element that he or she can provide. For the poet, that element is time, the air we mortals breathe. Paintings are overwhelmingly a temporal and spatial, where poetry (rhythmical breathing) brings a sense of temporality, of time passing. Conversely—to change the preposition again—what draws the poet to write *to* a painting, to want to address it, is that art’s brilliance at capturing still points, quiet moments that are almost unachievable in the course of one’s daily life.”

He in a nutshell covered the curiosity of the poet while attempting a poem on a painting. Ekphrastic poetry is seen as a conversation in which each voice adds resonance to the other. There is an elaborate dialogue between the two varied art forms – the painting and the poem.

Twenty-first century internet aids development of ekphrastic poetry. Online portals give the raw material which was best utilized by the young budding writers and at the same time provided a platform to be marked and noticed. Social networking sites helped give fame to young artists which remained otherwise unnoticed.

The writer of new age requires basic computer skills to make the world know about the poem. Each writer had luxury to create a free page on any social networking site and post the works. There is no requirement needed to contact publishing houses or involvement in any sort of money investment on marketing the book. A Public account page is enough. Gives the work a virtual space and serves the needs of reading similar to the physical book. It can be seen by many and hyperlinked by many. Hyperlinking helps reach the post to the enumerable people across the world. The writers have total control over the page and can regulate the access of the account as per the needs. The number of views and likes could be seen promptly by the artist. Connecting people with the same inclination becomes easy. What the writers does can be done by the painters too. There are instances available online where the poet and painter have a joint venture and comes up with new works of art and verse together.

In last couple of years one can notice a shift in ekphrastic poetry writing that many writers on Instagram and Facebook attempted to take contemporary paintings and write poetry. The love for ancient and canonical paintings is still thriving but there is a clear preference seen for the recent art works. Both the writer and painter in most cases are new to the field with not much fame and popularity. A single post with the tag of the writer and the painter changes the world for both. It's seen as a win-win situation for both the young budding artists.

In the mutual relationship which is established by the writer and painter on social networking sites is productive to the gallery houses. If the painter has recently exhibited the painting at the gallery, the gallery too gets the equal credits. On social internet domain, this practice gives recognition and builds a positive image of the painter, the writer and the gallery at which the painting was exhibited. The twenty-first century ekphrastic poetry develops a harmonious relationship between the poet and painter who are both living.

An interesting trend can be noticed in the early decade of the twenty-first century is that the paintings selected to write poems were often contemporary paintings and not the old ancient paintings. Majority of the poems had inclination towards the paintings of twentieth century painters. Concluding that twentieth century paintings had a large influence on ekphrastic poetry writing in twenty-first century. It can be traced that the new twenty first century writers have enough raw material on the paintings, painters and even the poems attempted on them. Frida Kahlo's paintings inspired poet Pascale Petit to write *What Water Gave Me*, a collection of ekphrastic poems solely dedicated it. Wesley D Gary writes poems inspired by the artwork of Zdzislaw Beksinski in the collection *Come Fly with Death*.

Modern day art museums and galleries are places which are not reserved to host exhibitions but competitions too. These museums have their websites and official pages on twitter, Facebook and Instagram which help viewers updated for the events. 'MoMa' – The Museum of Modern Art based in Manhattan has 4.9 million followers having more than 4000 posts on Instagram as of February 2020. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York celebrates 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in March 2020 and the museum conducts art exhibitions and events to promote art. It becomes easy for these museums to promote and propagate their ideas. Art lovers across the globe gets a peep through the activities hosted by the museums and some enthusiast might even pay visit. Mori Art Museum in Tokyo has approximately million visitors every year and graciously shares its contemporary art on public domain.

Many new generation poets who cannot pay a physical visit to the museums can easily access art forms with the help of internet. With space being vanished and time ceased, any work form can be accessed anywhere anytime at the convenience of the internet user and this very



opportunity was utilized by the writers to write a poem on. Technology has high contribution in promoting ekphrastic poetry in the Twenty-first century.

The world's largest art museum, Musee du Louvre, Paris has official website which shows highlights of the museums and the museum also has a Twitter, Facebook and Instagram account where it keeps posting an artform everyday with details. The Instagram page of the museum has more than four million followers.

*World Make Way: New Poems inspired by Art from the Metropolitan Museum* becomes breakthrough books focusing on the art form specifically dedicated to art museum. The work is collection of poems by eighteen poets inspired by some of the most popular art works in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum and was published in 2018 and edited by Lee Bennet Hopkins.

Online literary magazines and journals are the new source of sharing popular literary criticism and creative talent. Magazines and journals have embraced ekphrastic poetry and helped to expand and enrich the prominence of ekphrastic poetry in twenty-first century. *Halfway down the Stairs*, an online literary magazine, marks 50<sup>th</sup> issue in March 2020. Award winning performance poet Alison Paradox got opportunity to exhibit her ekphrastic poetry at a group exhibition created in response to the work *The Red Room* by artist Louise Bourgeois.

Second decade of the twenty-first century saw ground-breaking ekphrastic poetry challenges. Online portals publish an image or painting at regular interval of time and invites the writers across the world to write poems. The submissions are accepted through email. The best poetry selected gets the poem published online and, in some cases, published in a book. This attempt gave opportunity to many and inspired people to become poets.

Ekphrastic poetry in ancient times was written to describe events or places as part of exercise in rhetoric. It was gradually taken as a leisure and creative activity to connect with the painting and help imagination to play its role in writing poem. Twenty-first century presents an all new avatar of ekphrastic poetry in English as a part of challenge and competition. The writer enters the competition to get recognized by the stalwarts in the field.

*Rattle*, the online poetry magazine with the mission to “to promote the practice of poetry” conducts Ekphrastic Challenge and features poems after selecting the best from the entries. The practice began when once they thought that it would be fun to challenge artists to attempt poem on image provided. The first challenge received 266 entries and decided to publish selected ekphrastic poems on a monthly series. Young poets get chance to submit their work and get it published on revered art magazines.

*Artlyst*, art information website based in London in association with the prestigious poetry organization The Poetry Society famous for some of the world's best poetry awards on the onset of year 2020 for the first time launched the international award for poetry based on the works of art. The Artlyst Art to Poetry Award winner would get one thousand pounds along with the publishing opportunity.

Art in twenty-first century undergoes vast changes. Impact of globalization has enhanced the interconnectivity of the human activity and information across the world. Internet and mass media have been an aid to contemporary art. Art galleries online gives exposure to various styles of art forms and there is a visible intermixing in contemporary art. Free mixing of media forms gives space to visual culture. A lot of inter disciplinary play takes place on the canvass sheet in terms of politics, science, technology, religion, gender, etc the pop culture on TV screens has crossed domains and entered oil canvass. A high surge of scientific

advancement along with individual bio art can be witnessed. In the similar manner the art form is largely influencing the poetry written on it. Earlier the attempts to write ekphrastic poetry was mainly on European and American paintings, now the poets have world of opportunity and writes poems on art forms by far east paintings.

Photography is at the peak of its technological avant-garde. Photography is seen not at camerawork of pictures but ideas. Photographs have to be unique, non-clichéd with fresh style in a way that touches the mind of views. Second decade of Twenty-first century is marked as post-digital age of photography. The introduction of smart phones and applications revolutionized the way photography was seen. Canon and Nikon remain and retains the tag of professional cameras but the smartphones give new opportunity to every owner to explore the field of photography. The traditional role of the photograph to capture a moment as it is has transformed. It is an idea, statement and a message. A photo gets manipulated with filters and editing. There is a high demand of photographic practice with larger market in terms of population. *Witness* published an article 'What is the role of 21<sup>st</sup> century post-digital photographer?' on June 7, 2017. A photographer in twenty-first century norms as per the article is

A conduit, a publisher, a writer, a marketer, a filmmaker and perhaps most important of all a storyteller that can fully utilize all the tools available to find, tell and disseminate their stories.

The role of photographers and photography is changing with the digital communication environment. There is large space available to explore the reality and get it circulated. Photography has its influence on the changing style, form and approach of the paintings.

Ekphrastic poetry in Twenty-first century attempts to write poetry on photographs with equal passion and zeal as on paintings or other art forms. Poets utilizes the new form and styles of photographs and attempts to write poetry on them. It works wonder. A new subject added to the poetry writing. From paintings, architectural wonders to photographs, ekphrastic poetry has accommodated every possible art form. Tyler Knott Gregson is a poet and a professional photographer, he captures photos and attempts to write poem on the photos captured. In three years he writes over one thousand poems.

*Visual Verse: An Anthology of Art and Words* is an online anthology of art, poetry, short fiction and non-fiction which every month supplies a compelling image and invites writers – published or unpublished to submit a piece in response. The picture provided the starting point of somethings new. It receives on average hundred and fifty submissions every month. Top selected works gets publishes the consecutive month.

Pakistani writer Noor Unnihar provides a different view point to ekphrastic poetry. She combines photographs, newspaper clippings, art colour papers and her own sketches in a collage and attempts to write poem on it. She is the Instagram and YouTube sensation and in 2017 published her first collection of poems *Yesterday I was a Moon*. A year after she comes up with art poetry journal *Find your Voice: A Guided Poetry Journal for Your Heart and Your Art*.

In 2018 comes the ground-breaking publication of Christopher Guerin' s *My Human Disguise*, gives a collection of two hundred ekphrastic sonnets. Each poem describes and interprets an image, painting, photograph, print, drawing or sculpture.

Another tendency of twenty-first century ekphrastic poetry is that all the writers had initial fame on social networking sites and had earlier posted their parts of work online and later

compiled their work and published it. Devon Balwit publishes *Risk Being/Complicated Inspired by the Collage Art of Lorette C Luzajic*. The book is explosive ekphrastic attempt by two women who come to gather promoting art and poetry. Devon Balwit writes poem and Lorette C. Luzajic created illustrations layered with symbols. Patti Ross's *Poetry Collaboration: Catching Sunday Breakfast* consists of poems based on memories and April M Rimpo's *Painting Together*.

Twenty-first century ekphrastic encounters reveal that poets don't have writing as their only option as work. They are involved with many magazines, journals, education, many more. Pascale Petit is educator apart from being an award-winning poet. She conducts creative writing classes for a decade now at Poetry School. By late 2019, Angela M. Brommel in her work *Mojave in July* writes poems inspired by the artwork of Su Limbert. Angela is Humanities faculty and is also the Executive Director of Arts and Culture at Nevada State College.

Workshops and reading ekphrastic poetry sessions had been a fashion in recent years. Revered poets conduct workshop, teaching and inspiring young budding poets to attempt ekphrastic poetry writing. Along with art galleries and museums, cafeterias too become the centre for these literary activities. Now cafeterias are not restricted to socializing, reading books or newspapers but becomes the medium sponsoring interactions between writers and poetry fanatics. Jenise Miller a poet, conducts ekphrastic poetry workshops across the world. Susan Lynch and former poet Laureate Cal Kinnear conducted workshop of writing ekphrastic poetry in November 2018 at Vashon Centre for the Arts. They invited writers across the world to visit the Kay White building at Vashon Centre for the Arts. It was followed by the poetry reading. Susan Lynch began her recital reading Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. Cal read a prose poem he had written about his reaction to looking at William Morris's blown glass sculptures. Creative Coast conducted Poetry workshop on Ekphrasis in January 2020 by poet Henry Briffa.

Twenty-first century ekphrastic poetry becomes minimalistic in nature. Words are employed very judiciously. Very few examples of lengthy poems can be traced. Major writers try break the bounds of structure and grammar. Many poems don't include any capital letters and play with the punctuation marks. Writers inclines more towards using blank verse for their expression than being mellifluous.

Ekphrastic exhibitions have started blooming in twenty-first century. Shac Ballarat's ekphrastic exhibition *They are Us* continues for the month of March 2020 at Ballard, Utah, United States. His collection is series of photographs with poster or plugs cards. The exhibition is visited by various artists. There was a live music performance too along with prose and photos exhibited. Many forms of arts seem merging in twenty-first century or it is how every art form supports and benefits each other.

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