

Pedagogy of Practice: A History of Art Education and Art Institutions in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Bengal (1850-1951)

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The research surveys the foundational field of pedagogic structures in art schools and museums in India from 1850 to 1951, focusing on the negotiations of institutional art and craft practices, curriculum and art pedagogic goals, art educational policies, embryonic cultural identities and ideologies, and art history as a disciplinary practice, evolving in Bengal. The principal thrust of the research field is hence located in formative history of the Government School of Art, Calcutta (currently, the Government College of Art and Craft, Kolkata), the Indian Museum, Kala Bhavana, Visva-Bharati and Nandan Museum, Santiniketan. The shaping of colonial art historical nomenclatures of nineteenth and twentieth century in Indian art, as opposed to the writing of 'art history' as a recondite discipline during the phase, has been an intriguing route of shifts in mapping modernity via nationalism in India. This brings to the fore a range of standpoints, problems, arguments, definitions and methodologies in Indian 'fine arts', which evolved out of colonial, industrial, institutional and exhibition cultures. The research stems from this polemical location of art institutional history in Bengal and its perennial impact of the 'academic' methods of art practice and writing, vis-à-vis contemporary formats of critical cross-disciplinary engagement in twenty-first century south Asia.