

“GUERNICA”: RECONCILING MULTIPLE CONFLICTS THROUGH ART

W.M.P. S. Bandara

*Department of Fine Arts, Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
sudabandara@gmail.com*

The bond among art, conflict, and reconciliation is hidden, but inevitable. The basic intention of this research is to analyze the nature of this mutual bond in relation to *Guernica*. *Guernica* is a painting by Pablo Picasso, created in response to the bombing of Guernica, Spain. “Reconciliation” is a concept which is being widely used in the contemporary socio-political contexts. It is a subject matter which has received a considerable amount of attention due to its increasing relevance to the present-day society. In any conflict-ridden situation “reconciliation” is the procedure that dissolves the conflict and brings in harmony. A society consists of many social institutions such as family, economy, politics, media, religion, and education. These institutions operate on a mutual basis. At times, conflicts among these institutions occur when the powerful institutions attempt to exercise their power over the other institutions. For instance, the institution of politics, the most supreme institution, is capable of influencing other social institutions.

The research design used in this study is a qualitative research design including content analysis and phenomenological study.

Artists, as members of social institutions, are influenced by institutional conflicts. They tend to base their art work on these conflicts. They utilize art as a strategy of reconciling conflicts. Paintings are an effective art form; political conflict has been the theme of innumerable paintings. Through *Guernica*, Picasso wanted to reveal the world the repercussions of a war begotten out of despotic political schemes; the political wrath was appeased with the massacre of innocent civilians. Picasso had not only witnessed the outcome of war, but he was also a victim who suffered from its brutality. Therefore, his first intention of putting the incident on canvas was to give way to his trauma and reconcile his inner conflict. Secondly, he wished to share his experience with the commoners and help them reconciling their own conflicts. He had depicted the futility and brutality of war, through war; it was an attempt to express his dislike of war and to prevent such future calamities by educating the social beings of its fanatic outcome. He wanted to prove to the society of war’s woes and thus encourage its creators to think many times before breaking grounds for a battle. Likewise, Picasso’s attempt is admirable as his sole intention of drawing it had been not only to express his woe and distress but also a sincere and exemplary venture to fulfill a massive social responsibility of averting similar future catastrophes.

Although Picasso himself acknowledges that *Guernica* is a highly symbolic and political work, this emphasizes on the artist’s great ability to reconcile the war through his *Guernica* painting. Picasso’s painting affirm how well the artist has captured the ardency, distress, destruction, bereavement, and other negative aspects associated with war; it has become a device of reconciling war-conflicts over the world. Thus, it can convey to people its message beyond all material barriers, frontiers. Art and reconciliation is therefore inseparable.