

VisionMix and The Srishti Institute of Art, Design & Technology  
present

## Future Orbits

Srishti Outpost @ MillHall

A COLLATERAL PROJECT OF KOCHI-MUZIRIS BIENNALE 2016



**6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> January 2017 11-7pm daily**  
**Mill Hall, Mattancherry, Kochi, Kerala 682002**

VisionMix is an international network of artists, filmmakers, curators, art/film critics, and producers in film, artists' moving image and photography. Our international alliances generate events such as exhibitions, screenings, publications and wider debate in this sector. We share practices amongst arts professionals and audiences between Europe, South East & South Asia.

Coinciding with the Kochi-Muziris biennale as an independent initiative, Future Orbits explores speculative futures across a range of presentations, debates and film screenings over three days. This gathering investigates three strands of inquiry: *Urban Imaginaries/ Global Ontologies*, *'Rights' in a Right-Wing World* and *The Work of Curation*. Discussing on-going projects and strategies, the participants & audiences share a process that thickens with each 'orbit' of rotation, encouraging the collective development of new propositions, interventions & creative action. We invite you to imagine the future as co-passengers across different time zones, locations and historical periods, drawn together by this collective gazing. Questioning, probing and revealing the critical imaginative capacities we use to construct time and space, our 'future' constellations may thus be drawn in the present.

VisionMix would like to thank the Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology, without whose support this event would not have been possible. Additional thanks are due to University of Winchester, Arts Council England, Prohelvetia - Swiss Arts Council, and to all the participants.

# PROGRAMME

## Friday 6<sup>th</sup> January

11.00-11.30 Introduction to the event by the organisers

11.30-1.30 Geeta Patel Presentation with Q&A

Respondents: Ranjit Kandalgaonkar, Abhishek Hazra, Rashmi Sawhney, Rohan Shivkumar, Jennet Thomas

### *The Aesthetic at a Time When Everything Has Been Stretched To Failure*

Makers, practitioners, installation artists finessing the edges of biotechnologies, film-makers and performers have tussled with and tugged and pressed at form, shape, space and temporality to configure their trysts with the 'escalating crises' that have turned so quotidian in these times that we inhabit. Here, I would like to turn to what this means for the practices of composing in word, to writing theory fleshed as aesthetic. How might one bring not just what we write, but how we write into a conclave with the eschatologies ensconced in the challenges posed by aesthetic genres? What would it mean to unwind the raptures of Newtonian mechanics that have become so quotidian, and are reinstalled precisely in and along the routes writers take as they argue for their demise? How does one speak, coral, incarnate in writing Donna Haraway's new call for the tentacular (against the Anthropocene or the Capitalocene) as the apt metaphor for how we must now think? How do we voice theory so that it is not captured by its inevitable collapse into the prim rigours of realist expository form, so that our very practice becomes attentive to vulnerability and catastrophe?

Geeta Patel is the Director of UVA in India and an Associate Professor at the University of Virginia, with three degrees in science and a doctorate from Columbia University, NY in interdisciplinary South Asian Studies focusing on Sanskrit and Urdu. She has published widely on the collusive conundrums posed by bringing finance, science, sexuality and aesthetics together, and translated lyric and prose from Sanskrit, Urdu, Hindi and Braj. Her first monograph, *Lyrical Movements, Historical Hauntings: On Gender, Colonialism and Desire in Miraji's Urdu Poetry*, reimagines the landscape of Urdu modernism. Dr Patel's second book, *Risky Bodies & Techno-Intimacy* uses techno-intimacy as the locus for interrogating capital, science, media and desire. She is the co-editor of two special issues that engage several of her areas of expertise. *Area Impossible for GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (2016), interrogates the spaces constituted between area studies and queer studies. *Trust and Islamic Capital for Society and Business Review* (2016-2017) with Dr. Rula Abdulrazak will be published in the following year. Dr. Patel is completing three other manuscripts, one on the poetics of finance (historical pensions, insurance, credit, debt) and farm finance; one on Ismat Chughtai; and one on fantasies embedded in advertising, *Billboard Fantasies*.

1.30-2.30 Lunch break

**2.30-3.30**

**Marie Velardi**

**Talk/presentation**

**Interlocutor: Rashmi Sawhney**

***Book of Possible Futures***

Within her practice, Marie employs fact and fiction to both imagine and question the future. Her work closely examines movements of the earth, such as the continuous shift between land and sea or inhabited islands disappearing into the ocean, due to rising water levels. (*Atlas of Lost Islands* was exhibited at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale, 2014). Marie's use of fiction to present a timeline of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as described in sci-fi literature and film (for the work, *Future Perfect, 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2014), offsets our sense of reality to suggest a powerful yet playful protest that reflects on the uncertainty of our future, and the condition of the earth today.

For *Future Orbits*, Marie Velardi will present a selection of works on different relationships and ways of considering the future. She will also present the new works developed over a residency in India (in 2016), drawn from the pages of a hypothetical *Book of Possible Futures*, with short phrases, written in English and Marathi, inspired by discussions the artist had with Indian women about their hopes and desires for the future.

Marie Velardi is a Swiss visual artist who lives and works in Geneva and Paris. Her work has been exhibited in Switzerland, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy and the UK. In 2014-2015 she represented Switzerland at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in India. She was awarded among others the '2015 Scholarship of the City of Geneva' for her on-going research project: *Terre-Mer (Sea-Land)*. In 2016 she was selected by Pro Helvetia for a 3-month residency in India (in Delhi and Mumbai respectively). <http://marie.velardi.ch/>

**3.30-4.00**

**Coffee break**

**4.00-5.30**

**Abhishek Hazra**

**Talk**

**Interlocutor: Geeta Patel**

***The Cloudy Precipitate of Errant Ghontologies***

Abhishek's presentation will be around his ongoing work in engaging with the histories of science through a speculative artistic practice. Can an event located in the field provisionally agreed upon as art, bring together, even momentarily, the disparate discursive strands that cross-hatch a given historical moment? What would it mean to foreground ephemerality and sound a minor key in such an attempt while trying to avert the genre conventions that regulate the intersection of emburdened categories? (for e.g, 'performance', 'science', 'art', 'history' and the 'public'). Additionally, with the increasing instrumentalization of creative practices and the concomitant precarity of the cultural worker, is there any hope of reclaiming the figure of the enthusiastic amateur who only desires to transmit his affective intensity?

Based in Bangalore, Abhishek Hazra's works traverse a diverse, yet closely interconnected mesh of interests. He uses video and performance that often integrate textual fragments drawn from real and fictional scenarios. Histories of science and an ironic fascination with theoretical approaches are just some of the interests that inform his practice. Increasingly interested in performance while still being quite ambivalent about privileging 'liveness', his recent series of

lecture performances explore questions around affect, precarity and provincial cosmopolitanism. Abhishek is currently participating in the main exhibition at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2016 with a mobile lecture performance spread across 3 episodes.

He has exhibited and performed widely in various institutions and contexts that include Experiment Marathon, Reykjavik Art Museum, Kunstmuseum Bern, Bose Pacia, New York, MAXXI Museum, Rome, GallerySKE, Bangalore, KHOJ, New Delhi, Kiran Nadar Museum and OCAD, Toronto. He has been a Charles Wallace scholar and an artist-in-residence in various residences including Gasworks, London, Art Omi, New York and SymbioticA, Centre of Excellence in Biological Arts, Perth. Abhishek has also been the recipient of multiple awards including the 2011 Sanskriti Award for Visual Art.

## **5.45-7.00                  Jennet Thomas                  Screening/Performative Lecture**

**Introduced by Lucia King**

### ***The Unspeakable Freedom Device* (film, 37 mins)**

*The Unspeakable Freedom Device* is an experimental narrative film, set in a future-primitive world where the difference between magic and technology has become incomprehensible. A darkly comic Sci-Fi Folk-tale, with an apocalyptic take on future right wing politics, the film follows the pilgrimage of two women through a dystopian world of collapsing signs and imploding meanings, on a quest to cure their green baby. Our characters become entangled in a cargo-cult that worships Margaret Thatcher. Red, Green, and Blue characters – that could be distorted versions of long-dead political factions -appear to them amongst the many trials of their journey. The Film explores the idea of the image of Margaret Thatcher as an after-burn on the collective memory of British culture. Though seemingly rooted in the particularities of British cultural history - this is just a necessary, local starting point. I am interested much more widely in belief systems, ideas of truth, power and pleasure, and how cultural memories are re-made and distorted according to the needs of each era. The film is an exploration of how we construct meaning through storytelling forms, some borrowed from the TV shows of our childhood. Crucially it explores the power of nonsense to ignite joyful energies of refusal, resistance, affirmation. It expresses a fever-dream fantasy emerging from current global anxieties; ecological catastrophe, populist political extremism, our ever more dependant relationship with technology through our 'devices'.

Jennet Thomas seeks to explore how the themes of her film resonate from a perspective beyond the Anglo-American world. When screened recently in the USA the themes of charismatic media forces provoked lively debate on the rise of Donald Trump. Beyond themes, she is also interested in popular forms; the musical, fantasy, science fiction, using film very openly to make works that can engage all kinds of audiences beyond the 'Art' orbit. This film was the subject of an absurd censorship row in the UK when the gallery that commissioned it (Grundy Gallery, Blackpool) was bullied by two local Conservative counsellors to ban the work, because they decided to take offence at the prospect of the depiction of Margaret Thatcher in a satirical light in a publicly funded gallery. After a long battle, the work was finally shown. In the context of disturbing reports of increasing political censorship in India she invites discussion on this topic.

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> January**

**11.00-1.00 Vinita Gatne & Ranjit Kandalgoankar Presentation/Discussion**

**Interlocutor: Rohan Shivkumar**

***Seven Isles Unclaimed and Isles Amidst Reclamation***

The first section presented by Ranjit showcases his land-reclamation research from two projects: *Seven Isles Unclaimed* and *Isles Amidst Reclamation*. There still remains an obsession of various vested agencies citing reclamation as a solution to the so-called 'lack of space for the ever-expanding city.' He is hoping to locate some of these stories within a larger narrative in the mode of an overarching critique. By way of explanation, he would like to engage others in a conversation about an artistic practice dependant on audience engagement, seeding stories, debunking them as well, truth-telling and hoax-creating; some of his long-term preoccupations. He is constantly on the lookout for some liars, as well as straight-shooters; kindred souls who can help him engage with various devices to reaffirm the potential or expose the futility of such practices.

The second section 'diagram as speculation' is located at the margin in-between land and water, wherein the space is constantly modified by the ebb and flow of water. To explore the ephemeral conditions of the wetlands, Vinita inserts interactive diagrams that study and speculate how this space can be negotiated within the duration of its recurring transient nature. Vinita will present her interactive diagrams (on the table), so that the respondents can engage with them physically. She will introduce, and discuss, the work along with videos of the same. She is keen to engage in a conversation about the capacity of diagrams to speculate configuration without giving it a definite form. In the larger conversation about the 'orbits', she sees her interactive diagrams as something that captures a moment or a duration that occurs in the ebb and flow of the tide and the ephemeral nature of the wetlands.

*Seven Isles Unclaimed* is a collaboration, with varied practitioners that takes divergent forms of conveying research. The first being diagrams performing as contraptions/machines, the second being a speculative storytelling practice, and the third being a digital mapping exercise. In images, diagrams, maps, and collaboration, the drive to "reclaim" productive, rentable land from untamed water are interrupted, displaced, retold, and reimagined.

Ranjit's images follow real and potential trajectories in the colonial timeline punctuated by flash-points in the city's history when specific incidents triggered land reclamation. The (in)authentic narratives may vary. There might be an account that is embellished, an oral history that remains uncorroborated, anomalous but un-ignored, an obviously falsified account but supported by factual data or a drawing (a fiction) describing a well-documented event in the timeline. All these narratives are presented without distinction, hence its 'survival' is pivoted on the audience's acceptance. As a viewer, you may you choose to go along with the narrative or dismiss it.

Vinita Gatne is an Architect based in Mumbai. Through her studio practice she explores the interplay between activity, mechanics and spaces. Alongside her studio practice, she works research projects focussing on perception of health in creation and administration of institutions of care and treatment. Her current research project *The Architecture of Public Health Trusts in Colonial Bombay* funded by the Wellcome Trust UK, focuses on the processes through which various spatial arrangements i.e. sanatoriums, hospitals and dispensaries were drafted to treat tuberculosis in early 20th century. She is also working on an archival research project on Shenley Mental Hospital (UK) that explores the role of treatment in the creation and administration of asylum spaces.

Kanjit Kandalgoankar lives and works in Mumbai and his art practice primarily comprises a lens directed at the urban context of cities. His project *cityinflux* is one such ongoing experiment and a central theme to his urban practice. He was the recipient of The Leverhulme Trust Artist in Residence Award (2012) for an interactive game on market places called *build/ browse*, a Majlis Visual Arts Fellowship (2007) for the project *Gentricity* on living conditions in high density areas of Mumbai, a U.D.R.I Fellowship (2009) on the 19th century philanthropic activities of Mumbai's communities. Other projects include *7 Isles Unclaimed* (2014); *Isles Amidst Reclamation* (2015) curated by the Mohile Parikh Centre, which documented the loss of habitat of the original flora and fauna of the city due to land reclamation. *Modeled Recycled Systems* (2008-) is a long term project recording ship-breaking practices which was exhibited at the Bergen Assembly (2016), an Art & Research Triennial.

**1.00-2.00                  Lunch break**

**2.00-4.00                  Shubhangi Singh & Lucia King                  Screening/Discussion**

*Joint presentation, two short films.*

Each artist will speak about the contextual background of their respective works, followed by their film screenings. Thereafter, Shubhangi and Lucia will reflect upon- and make connections between their own practices (and conceptual focus), the projects of Kanjit Kandalgoankar, Vinita Gatne and the film of Avijit Mukul Kishore and Rohan Shivkumar (see notes below for 4.30-6.30, Film title: *Nostalgia for the Future*).

Beginning with *Dawn to Dust* (5 mins, 2016) by Shubhangi Singh

*Dawn to Dust* examines the position of man in relation to his environment and contemplates the impact the cyclical plundering of resources have on the personal and the collective human existence. Set in an ethos of geo-political displacement, mass exodus, mindless invasions and lost resistance, this piece is intended as an elegy to the present. Lamenting this cataclysmic involvement of mankind, it calls upon the viewer into a moment of collective mourning over engagement with the piece. *Dawn to Dust* is a mixed media video work that combines motion footage, found material and hand drawn images to weave a narrative.

Shubhangi Singh's practice as a visual artist and filmmaker investigates the entropic culture we currently exist in and attempts to observe the socio-political impact of the individual as an influencing force. Living between Mumbai and Sydney, Shubhangi often draws upon her personal experiences to question displacement and identity and, in the process, extend the discourse on to the public sphere. Singh attempts to consistently consolidate her formal training in films (Film and Television Institute of India, Pune) with her current practice to continually create and collaborate. Her works include documentaries, video poetry, community projects, sound pieces, sketches and video installations. She is interested in archives, folktales and the vague blurring between fact and fiction. Shubhangi Singh's works have been part of the 28th Festival Les Instants Video (Milan, Italy), BideoDromo– International Experimental Film and Video Festival (Bilbao, Spain), Strangoscope– Experimental Film, Audio and Performance Festival (Florianópolis, Brazil), IDSFFK (Kerala, India) and + Institute for Experimental Arts (Athens, Greece) amongst others. Shubhangi is also the co-founder of New City Limits, an artist collective and space for arts practice and discourse in Navi Mumbai.  
<https://www.facebook.com/newcitylimits/>

Followed by *A changing line in the light falls* (film, 15 mins, 2017) by Lucia King

*A changing line in the light falls* explores questions of space, place and the dis-articulated desire of belonging (corporeally) to the city that Avijit Mukul Kishore and Rohan Shivkumar's film, *Nostalgia for the Future* also lays bare in a different, but related sense. As citizens, we have no choice but to improvise our habitation amidst the contradictory forces of urban expansionism and the 'demographising' of human lives, the utilitarian models of citizenship that many contemporary architectural visions are founded upon, with their lacunae of social exclusion. *A changing line in the light falls* is an animated drawing set to music that depicts an infinitely scrolling, ephemeral landscape; one that resists all such delineations. In a climate of increased fragility, (or near extinction of) the time-space to be human, my film decelerates time and offers a procession of gradually looming apparitions. In cartography and the colonizing process (of land appropriation), the drawing of lines has always been a basic vehicle to assert control. Yet the very different 'drawing of lines' in poetry, art-making or music serves here as a counter-movement to the dominance of material transformation presented as strategic economic development. My work is quite abstract and does not narrate the above in an expository way. Rather, my collaboration with the composer, Will Saunders (based in Köln, Germany) and the vocal artists, Sara Byers and Nicholas Wilson has allowed me to explore an alternate way of imagining landscape as a time continuum. I am also interested in how these virtual scapes emerge in the mind from the void, where drawing becomes a conversation with that void.

Lucia King is an artist, filmmaker, and founder/curator of the VisionMix network. Having lived and worked in the Netherlands, Spain and India, (born in London) she studied at Central Saint Martins College of Art, and the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten (Amsterdam). Her projects have spanned 35mm and 16mm short films, documentaries, public art projects, video installations produced for galleries and museums, and architecturally responsive artworks in drawing and painting. Her main collaborative (film) projects are co-productions with international performing artists and theatre directors, such as Simon Vincenzi (UK) Will Saunders (UK/Germany) and Adishakti (India). She has exhibited her work in galleries and venues such as the Stedelijk Museum (NL) Galería Fidel Balaguer (Spain) Bluecoat Gallery (UK) Teater der Welt (Germany) and numerous international Film Festival circuits. Her earlier works explore both philosophically and corporeally, the transformations that occur in the performer's body reflecting the transitional states of the imaginary. Recent works are based on animations of her drawings. [www.luciaking.co.uk](http://www.luciaking.co.uk)

**4.00-4.30            Coffee break**

**4.30-6.30            Avijit Mukul Kishore & Rohan Shivkumar Screening/Discussion**

**Respondents: Lucia King, Rashmi Sawhney, Gigi Scaria**

***Nostalgia for the Future* (video and 16mm, 54 mins)**

The 'modern' Indian nation was born with the utopian zeal of creating a new model of citizenry. This new citizen was supposed to inhabit a world that was born anew, against what were seen as the old-fashioned and feudal systems of the past. *Nostalgia for the Future* is an exploration of that aspiration towards modernity in the way it imagined the intimate spaces that this ideal citizenry was to inhabit - the home. It is a cinematic exploration of architecture and modernity in India, over the period of over a century.

The film focuses on four distinct imaginations of 'home' for the modern Indian nation: the Lukshmi Vilas Palace at Baroda, a gigantic palace built for a progressive, benevolent monarch in the late 19th Century; the Villa Shodhan in Ahmedabad, a private residence designed by Le

Corbusier, in which the film explores domesticity within Nehruvian modernity; the Sabarmati Ashram where the Gandhian aspirations of the nation-state are seen; and public housing in post-independence Delhi designed by the Government of India to house refugees from Pakistan and the bureaucrats of the newly independent nation. The film explores these through the evocation of the cinematic and aural collective memory of the nation trying to reinvent itself. As a result, it uses a mix of formats - digital video, 16mm film and archival footage from mainstream cinema and state propaganda.

Script: Rohan Shivkumar; Camera, editing and narration: Avijit Mukul Kishore  
Sound recording: Asheesh Pandya; Additional sound recording: Suresh Rajamani  
Sound post: Gissy Michael; Assistant director: Sabari Pandian  
Producer: Films Division of India

Avijit Mukul Kishore is a filmmaker and cinematographer based in Mumbai, working in documentary and inter-disciplinary moving-image practices. He is involved in cinema pedagogy as a lecturer, and curates film programmes for prominent national cultural institutions. His films as director include *Snapshots from a Family Album*, *Vertical City*, *To Let the World In*, *Electric Shadows* and *Nostalgia for the Future*, and as cinematographer: *Kumar Talkies*, *Kali Salwaar*, *John and Jane*, *Seven Islands and a Metro*, *Bidesia in Bumbai*, *I am Micro* and *An Old Dog's Diary*.

Rohan Shivkumar is an architect and an urban designer practicing in Mumbai, and Deputy Director at the Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute for Architecture and Environmental Studies. His work spans architectural and interior design, to urban research and consultancy on issues concerning housing, public space and sanitation. He is co-director of *Nostalgia for the Future*. He is interested in exploring the many ways of reading and representing the city, and is co-editor of the publication on a research and art collaboration - Project Cinema City. He also curates film programmes and writes for Anarchytect (blog) on cinema and urban issues. He is working on a book discussing approaches to the design of homes among Indian architectural practices.

## **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> January**

**11.00-12.15      Gigi Scaria      Screening/Discussion**

**Interlocutor: Ranjit Kandalgaonkar**

### ***The Ark and the imagination of many new worlds***

The human imagination has always been marked by a desire to erase the past and start with new beginnings. The idea of a new beginning often reveals a confusion about the extent to which the past should be erased as well as an uncertainty whether new beginnings are the onset of new civilisations or merely an undoing of immediate pasts? As evidenced from the flood stories such as Noah's Ark or the Babylonian stories of flood circulated through different civilisations, one point is certain that the idea of complete erosion and absolute newness is a strong latent desire of the human mind. Where does this urge come from? Does it stem from the guilt we carry through the centuries that we could have done better and that we messed up the opportunities we had?

My show titled *The Ark* deals with many aspects of human existence and habitat. It reflects the environmental devastation, refugee camps and the idea of new architectural abodes, which accommodate, resist, and expand new urban spaces. The future as an extension of the present eludes being completely graspable by those who imagine it. I will present a set of images and



four videos from *The Ark* exhibition, exploring questions that mark the task of imagining (im)possible futures.

Gigi Scaria's videos, installations, paintings and photographs engage with the issues of the ever changing character of urban development while keeping a close eye on social systems, migration and architectural spaces of contemporary India. He has partaken in important residencies and workshops, which include Pistaletto Foundation, Italy and Macgeorge Fellowship (Ian Potter Museum of Art), Melbourne. He participated in India Pavilion, Venice Biennale (2011), Singapore Biennale (2011) Prague Biennale (2010) and the current edition of Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2015. Recipient of the prestigious Inlaks and the Sanskriti awards, Gigi's works have found place in prominent museums and collections worldwide. Scaria lives and works in New Delhi.

**12.30-2.00**

**R. V. Ramani**

**Screening/Discussion**

**Interlocutor: Lucia King**

### ***Scaling a Peak***

Ramani has been working towards a film over the last 4 years, based on the idea of home, history and future. Looking at an area in Mumbai, Worli, where once textile mills mushroomed, and where the British first built their housing colonies for the migrants in 1924. More than 100 three-storied single room apartments called BDD chawls map this area. It is here, after the independence in 1947, the Indian State experimented with large scale housing by building its first housing colony. It is a story of migration, labour and the present scenario, looking towards the future. It is also a deeply personal story of relationships and social fabric, as this is his own 'home' where he grew up and continues to visit.

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R.V. Ramani, is one of the leading documentary filmmaker from India. Born in 1957, he graduated in Physics from Mumbai University and worked as a photojournalist in Mumbai. He later joined the Film and TV Institute of India, Pune, graduating with specialization in Motion Picture Photography. He then shifted to Chennai and since then has been making independent documentaries as aspects of expressions. With more than 20 films to his credit, he has established a very unique style of making impressionistic films. His films and retrospectives have been presented in many forums and film festivals.

**2.00-3.00**

**Lunch break**

Interlocutors: Avijit Mukul Kishore and Katarzyna Sobucka

### *The Work of Curation*

Rashmi Sawhney and Madhuja Mukherjee will explore issues around what the work of curation entails in our present moment. While Rashmi will lay out a broad spectrum of questions and propositions with respect to curatorial practice, Madhuja will focus specifically on TENT, an experimental space for the exhibition of cinema and the visual arts in Kolkata. The panel will look at aspects of inter-mediality, convergence cultures, affect, solidarity, and other phenomenon & non-phenomenon that mark their interpretations of the work of curation. The session will lead into a Roundtable.

#### *Rethinking Curation: Tentative Questions and Speculative Propositions* - Rashmi Sawhney

From its ordinary meaning as 'care-takers' and 'preservers' to its more recent invocation as 'exhibition-makers' and 'producers of critical discourse', curatorial practice is transcribed by economy, aura and intent. In this larger context, what does the work of curation in our times really entail? What is at stake in leveraging creative practices to enable an agile & activist engagement not just with knowledge production but also with processes of 'becoming'? How can we develop curatorial methods that address mutually felt urgencies through public interventions and trans-disciplinary laboratories? How does one think about ways of sharing practices or forms of resistance? By what methods can we generate ideas both in an abstract/intellectual sense as well as pragmatically, for the purpose of building collaborations, solidarities and critical practices? Drawing upon a range of curatorial initiatives, I raise some tentative questions and offer speculative propositions about curation as an ontology.

#### *Inside a TENT / Outside the box* - Madhuja Mukherjee

TENT is a transformable, notional space in Kolkata whose projects (since 2012) are fuelled by the sense that we reside inside/outside multiple mirrors, windows, frames and cubes surrounded by diverse reflective screens; a means of both looking at the world, and the world regarding us. Rows and rows of TV sets (virtually a wall) in a shopping mall, show the same face in manifold dimensions, and then, as the transmission stops inadvertently let's us catch a glimpse of our own face staring at nothingness. Also on view are the large glass windows inside the shopping mall, huge LCD screens, CCTV cameras, multiplex screens, or the high-rises with luminous windows (at night). Alternately, the 'Selfie' is (literally) a twisted method of self-projection, and a mode of 'beholding' the viewer. Also, the 'touch' screen is both tactile and cold. Therefore, contemporary media contexts – that is, the interlinking between producers of art and audiences, fluidity of forms, genres, medium, textures - provoked many debates, which eventually created TENT, 'theatre for experiments in new technologies', a platform bridging between theory and practice.

Through a discussion of some of TENT's programmes, and especially its annual event - Little Cinema International Festival, I wish to raise a few questions regarding the growth of numerous festivals across the country, and hence, the logic and logistics of curating, programming and selection. How do we define experimental videos? Is it an abstract form? Or something personal perhaps, like for instance, 'the films, which we like'? There are various ways of tackling the term 'experimental' in the digital context, vis-a-vis the manner in which one categorizes videos and new media art, as well as shorts, documentary and narrative features. Is 'experimental' a formal concern or philosophical? Moreover, is it a painterly expression or does it belong to the realm of filmmaking, as in to cinema? Perhaps, 'experimental' film and video is to be found in some twilight zone, in no-man's isle. By highlighting two installations, one by TAXI (involving a camera,

lights, and a moving backdrop) and the other, by me (comprising photographs, film, lights, mirror-acrylic, paper and objects), hosted by TENT during December 2015, I intend to emphasize upon the liminality of evolving art forms, and in what way TENT facilitates exchanges between disparate media.

Madhuja Mukherjee studied Literature and Film at the University level, and has professional training in music (Sitar), and fine arts. She teaches in the Department of Film Studies, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, India, since 2007. She also works as artist, filmmaker and writer. Mukherjee's research areas involve subjects of film historiography, archives, industrial forms, technological transformations, gender, and public cultures. She has published extensively in scholarly journals, has edited anthologies, and written monograph on canon formation during the early period. Her feature-films 'CARNIVAL' (2012, Writer-Director), and 'QISSA' (2013, Co-written with the Director), have been selected for international festivals, and have received prestigious awards. She has developed the alternative art platform TENT (Calcutta); in 2014 TENT launched its first 'Little Cinema International Festival' for experimental films and art. Mukherjee has done a series of (solo) media-installations at renowned art galleries, and is working on her second graphic novel - 'The Dog Star' - supported by the India Foundation for the Arts, Bangalore, India.

Rashmi Sawhney is a Bangalore-based academic and writer whose work deals with cinema and visual culture, and is a co-founder of the VisionMix network. She is currently faculty at the Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology. Rashmi lived in Ireland for eleven years, where she did her PhD and later was faculty at Trinity College, Dublin & The Centre for Transcultural Research and Media Practice ([www.ctmp.ie](http://www.ctmp.ie)). Prior to joining Srishti she was Associate Professor at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi. Her research, teaching, and publications have dealt with gender, migration, and more recently science and speculative fictions in the context of cinema. Her interest in science fiction arises from her interest in the relationship between history, the future and the present, and she sees science and speculative fictions as being ideological terrains as well as political processes through which collective social futures can be imagined. In her recent work, she has been exploring the science fictional imagination in India (editing *Studies in South Asian Film and Media*, 6,2 (2015)), Turkey, Japan, Argentina, Chile, and other countries outside the global North. Rashmi also headed the India Foundation for the Arts' Arts Practice and Curatorship programmes for two years, and has been interested in the intersections between popular cinema and the visual arts and their increasingly overlapping global trajectories.

Katarzyna Sobucka's presentation addressed the production of an organisational identity, including the role of small art institutions, their functionality and the social responsibilities behind them. She examined early phase discussions and development of ideas, along with the role of providing space for new productions, as vital to the ecosystem of the art world. Katarzyna explained how self-organization, self-institutionalisation and the changing role of curators are interconnecting. Small arts organisations currently exist somewhere between independent curatorial practices and its role within institutional context. As a result, the multi-tasking role of the curator represents the ubiquity (universality) of curating within the cultural industry as a whole. This role has surpassed the selection and placement of art or artefacts in a space; it has equally become about producing, facilitating, empowering the audience, artists, creating context, collaboration, and inspiring innovation, both in a physical space and in the virtual world. Her questions addressed how an organization's vision can effectively respond to present situations through a programme of diverse creative activities, while inspiring audiences, artists and collaborators. What constitutes this vision within an ongoing process of redefinition and self-awareness? How can the funding barriers be transformed into a productive and feasible discourse and practice? Katarzyna also presented her recent research into botanical classification as a tool of cultural force, which is instrumental in the creation of national and social identities. She addressed the relationship between science, geopolitics, empire and the

natural world. Her comments explored the politics of food, planting and the analysis of what growing edible and decorative plants represents within the context of cultural geography and the politics of postcolonial practices. This research will result in a series of activities entitled Tender Exotics (a common phrase used in 19c to describe plants growing in nurseries and greenhouses) taking place in London in 2017. Planned events will examine the ideological uses of plants, fruits, vegetables and herbs, including those that generate stereotypical images of locales, and the dialectic relationship between botany and the pursuit of power.

### **Roundtable**

The session will develop into an open platform for all participants. This is to discuss future plans for the next edition of Future Orbits, proposing potential formats for creative collaboration.

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**The directors of the VisionMix network and organisers of Future Orbits are Rashmi Sawhney, Lucia King and Amit S. Rai.**

**For queries on the programme and information on future activities by VisionMix, please contact us via the website:**

**<http://www.visionmix.info/contact>**