

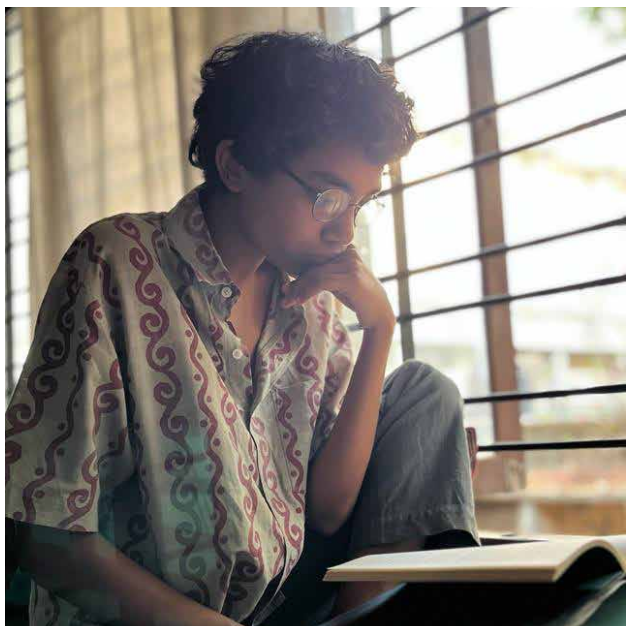


BEYOND THEORY

Mapping Feminist Practices in the Contemporary

PANEL SUMMARIES

Write ups by Rukmini Swaminathan



Rukmini Swaminathan is a freelance researcher. She is interested in exploring the intersections between textile, design and architecture histories of South Asia.

STILL STAYING WITH THE TROUBLE

A conversation between Renuka Rajiv & Arnika Ahldag

The conversation between Arnika Ahldag and Renuka Rajiv began with their experiences of attending events in the art and film spaces, where one is made to portray a reflection of a confident artist. While men might fumble on stage or hesitate to describe their work, which might be seen as endearing, a woman artist would be seen as underconfident in a similar situation. Arnika and Renuka talked about the possibilities of creating spaces where artists can break away from these norms of role play in order to make room for doubt in their work. What would such spaces look like? What kind of conversations would emerge when such vulnerabilities are exposed? Renuka observed, such conversations easily emerge amongst friends but it is difficult to have candid conversations in institutional spaces like museums.

Arnika engaged with the theme of doubt and the need for honest conversations from the perspective of a curator and a member of an institution. These conversations are facilitated in an institutional capacity by attempting to broaden the community. However, it can be tricky to navigate through these spaces given their often tokenistic politics of representation. Can one expect to have inclusive conversations wherein artists feel comfortable enough to express their shortcomings and their unknowingness of their own work?

The conversation between Arnika and Renuka concluded with the role of quietness and its way of bringing the audience closer to the artist. With minimal support from institutions, artists can communicate with the audience by letting their work speak for themselves. Through quiet gestures and conversations, our self-doubts can be shared, nurtured and supported.

■ Panel 01

Renuka Rajiv has had an interest in making things since childhood, exploring drawing, paper mache, tie-dye and stitching. They studied digital video production at Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology in Bengaluru and a Bachelor of Fine Arts (with Honours) majoring in printmaking at Victorian College of Art, Melbourne. Since then, their work has reconnected with their childhood interests of playing with fabric and paper. Most themes and content in their work are personal, which includes the compulsion towards the hand-made. Their work inhabits a space that accommodates the imaginative, observational and autobiographical. Since 2012 they have been exhibiting regularly in group and solo shows. Recently they have exhibited at Walkin Studios (Bangalore), Home Sweet Home (Bangalore), Vadehra Art Gallery (Delhi), Stockroom (Kyneton), Blakdot (Melbourne), Brunswick Artspace (Melbourne) and Feltspace (Adelaide). Their animation was also included in the Festival Mondial des Cinemas Sauvages (Brussels). Prizes include FICA Emerging Artist Award, the Substation exhibition prize and the City of Stonington Print Prize. They have been on art residencies at CONA (Bombay), T.A.J. (Bangalore) and Pro Helvetia + FICA (Lucerne).

Arnika Ahldag is Chief Curator at the Museum of Art & Photography

ON FEMINIST CURATING

In conversation with Srajana Kaikini, Pramodha Weerasekera and Veeranganakumari Solanki, the discussion explored the practice of curating. Is it the curator's responsibility to create an accommodative environment that allows for dialogue between different perspectives and positionalities? If so, how do they practise this while simultaneously exercising their ways of seeing and moulding exhibition spaces?

Carrying forward the previous session's discussion on the artist's doubt, Veeranganakumari expressed her initial discomfort with her project *Future Landing* which forced her to 'let go' of her role as a curator. Artists could decide when and how they wanted to present their work. Going about this exhibition during the pandemic, also pushed her to confront new ways of curation through the digital medium which differed from the usual practices of exercising control as a curator in physical spaces. Pramodha spoke about her experience working at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Colombo, which is a relatively new museum. She doesn't have the freedom to create spaces of dialogue that can emerge from the loosening of control but as a curator, she found other ways to push boundaries. Through her work in outreach and art education, she has changed curricula which have forged new 'ways of seeing' already-known works of art in Colombo.

Connecting the object, subject and audience through the lens of the curator comes with responsibility. It could be with educational outreach or subtle guidance in an exhibition. The curator also has to lead the way and show the audience that they can interact with an exhibit and respond in creative ways. Unlike the West where the audience and curator interact in more standardised 'experimental' ways such as eating or cooking together, Srajana observed that similar practices don't exist in gallery or museum spaces in India. Perhaps, the limited infrastructure and caste/class politics would push curators to find other modes of involving the audience.

■ Panel 02

Such experiments would push the threshold of control to deal with the unknown which is fundamentally a feminist approach to being more accommodative. These endeavours of connecting with the audience are felt tangibly when they are left with residues of an exhibition in the form of brochures to take home. Some curators like Veeranganakumari decide to follow a more flexible methodology of risk-taking. The lived experience is left intact, without residues, forcing the audience to rely on their memory.

The question and answer session gave the speakers a chance to talk about the care with which they have to push boundaries in curatorial practices. Here, access becomes crucial at several levels. Policies at the institutional level could make exhibitions and museums more accessible, at the same time these very institutions can restrict access to curators with their censorship laws. For a curator, they must find ways to balance different modes of access. The talk concluded with the other aspect of access; making the understanding of art accessible. By explaining the labour involved in the making of an object and the use of local languages, exhibitions can become more collaborative in their journeys of showcasing artworks and sharing knowledge.

■ Panel 02

Srajana Kaikini's work spans across curatorial, artistic and philosophical domains. Through her curatorial/creative practice, research, and writing she engages with philosophy, contemporary/modern art, image-based practices, curatorial studies, aesthetics and education. She is currently working on her forthcoming book on curatorial philosophy with Routledge and teaches as an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at SIAS, Krea University, Andhra Pradesh.

Pramodha Weerasekera is a researcher, writer, and curator based in Colombo, Sri Lanka. She has been the Assistant Curator Education and Public Programmes at the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Sri Lanka since its inception in 2019. Her role at the museum mainly involves curating public programmes and outreach to schools and universities in conjunction with exhibitions. Her research interests are in literary theory, justice, gender, and interconnections between visual cultures and text. Pramodha has also written for platforms such as ASAP|Art in an independent capacity.

Veeranganakumari Solanki is an independent curator and writer based in India. She is interested in the way interdisciplinary forms and creative practices merge, in order to create dialogues in public and private spaces, and the convergence of images across disciplines. Her research and practice consider how historical and contemporary thought informs exhibition-making and artistic practices. Solanki was the 2019 Brooks International Research Fellow at Tate Modern and a resident at Delfina Foundation. Currently, she is the Programme Director at Space Studio, Baroda, a core team member of Art Chain India and teaches the Curatorial Practice MFA course at Kathmandu University. She curated Future Landing: The Arcade at the Serendipity Arts Festival 2022.

ON WRITING WITH BODIES THAT PLAY

Encounters in the archive and the classroom

Pushing the boundaries of fiction and reality through forms of writing that do not adhere to neat categories of fiction or academic writing, Arushi Vats and Vijeta Kumar problematise the written form and its content.

They discussed Janaki Ammal, a botanist, in the 19th and 20th centuries; Anuradha Gandhi, a 20th-century communist leader and Pa. Ranjith, a Bahujan filmmaker in Tamil cinema, in the context of storytelling which becomes an activating agent of expression. Through the narrative form, their experiences are shared with a sense of lightness and yet they remain provocative.

Vijeta spoke of the Dalit artist through the work of Pa. Ranjith, citing his film *Sarpatta Parambarai*, which is about a Bahujan boxer who finally makes his way into the boxing ring. Crossing the boundaries of the ring becomes a symbolic gesture of belonging. Once the Bahujan student learns the rules of the classroom, she can make the battlefield her playground and share her own stories. But, often they don't see their work as 'academic' or 'aesthetic' enough. Who decides what is aesthetic, or academic? Vijeta observed every Bahujan is an artist in their own right but due to structural oppression, they refuse to see themselves in that light.

Arushi's interest in the lives of Janaki Ammal and Anuradha Gandhi began when she encountered them in the archives. While learning about them in the archives and their quiet presence in photographs, she developed a friendship with these two figures of the past which led her to create an auto-fictional work of the imagined lives they could have had. As she spent time with through materials, she grappled with questions of agency.

Were these women, subjects or agents in their own archive? What was Arushi's relationship with them through the archives and how could writing intervene in this relationship?

■ Panel 03

In conclusion, what stories emerge when you make space for play by bending the conventional rules of writing? What possibilities can it create for makers in the margins?

Arushi Vats is a writer based in New Delhi, India. Her essays have been published in online and print platforms such as Runway Journal, Alternative South Asia Photography, Write | Art | Connect, Scroll, Mint, and The Quint; and in publications by Serendipity Arts Foundation and Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, India; her short stories are published in Nether quarterly, Gulmohar Quarterly, and Hakara Journal; poetry has been published by PIX Quarterly, India and as addendum to an artist book by Anchorless Press, Canada. She works as Curator at Anant Art Gallery, based in New Delhi; and is the associate editor for Fiction at Alternative South Asia Photography. She is the recipient of the Momus - Eyebeam Critical Writing Fellowship 2021, and the Art Scribes Award 2021.

Vijeta teaches Communicative English at St. Joseph's University, Bengaluru. Her essays have appeared in The Third Eye, India Today, Deccan Herald and The Open Dosa. She writes at rumlolarum.com

THE EXPANDED DOCUMENT

The panel titled *Expanded Document*, explores the various ways in which artists have dealt with research and archiving through their practice.

The panellists Yashaswini Raghunandan, Adira Thekkuveetil and Afrah Shafiq each use different mediums such as documentary fiction, photography and games to delve into their practice-based research.

Through their work, they expand how we see and conceptualise methods of documentation.

Yashaswini's film *That Cloud Never Left*, traces the making of the circular red toys that create a sound when rattled against the wind. Yashwini's association with them began when she bought one from a roadside vendor, in Bengaluru, and found that the toy was made of old film reels. She began collecting them to piece together these films which led her to Murshidabad where the toys are made. The film emerged from this nascent curiosity only to stumble upon an economy that repurposes films to give them a second life through toys. Her work explores the entanglements of migration, labour, and history through the use of the 'red toy' and documentary fiction.

Blurring the lines between fiction and documentation of the real, Afrah's work takes the form of video games. For the last three years, Afrah documented Soviet children's books, which were widely circulated in India in the 1970s-80s. They had deeply influenced several generations of Indian readers of which many of them avidly began collecting these books as adults and writing about them on the internet. Through several conversations with collectors and visiting their archives, Afrah started finding connections between the themes of the stories, their visual language and readership. Using the device of the video game, users are given a chance to create their own worlds amidst this myriad of archived material.

■ Panel 04

Coming from the space of photography, Adira used photos as a means to reconnect and discover her family history. She observed her discomfort with some of her patriarchal ancestors. Through photographing her grandmother busy at housework and other everyday activities at home, Adira stirs the stability and distance portrayed in her family photo archive. She described her process and the voyeuristic gaze the camera presents itself with. To make it more interactive, she would show prints to her family and new discussions about the home would emerge.

The panel ended with a conversation between Rashmi Sawhney and the speakers about their reflections on the ethics of documentation and archiving lived experiences.

■ Panel 04

*Rashmi Sawhney is an Associate Professor of Cultural Studies at Christ University, Bengaluru, where she is the academic coordinator of the MA & PhD programmes in Cultural Studies. She writes on cinema and the visual arts, and her book, *The Vanishing Point: Moving Images After Video*, was published in 2022 by Tulika Books and Columbia University Press. She is co-founder of VisionMix, an international network of artists, filmmakers, curators, and researchers, whose last show, *Lost and Transience*, was held at the Hong-Gah museum in Taipei, Taiwan, in 2021. Other exhibitions she has curated include *Video Vortex XI & Future Orbits*, both held as collaterals of the 2017 Kochi Muziris Biennial, and *SET.RESET (2018)* at The House of Inquiry, Saligao, Goa. Her writing has been published in various international books and journals as well as in popular media such as *The Wire*, *Scroll*, *EPW*, *Indian Quarterly* and *DNA*.*

*Afrah Shafiq is a multimedia artist based between Goa and Bengaluru. Her art practice moves across various platforms and mediums, seeking a way to retain the tactile within the digital and the poetry within technology. Her work has been shown at the Meet Factory, Prague, Currents New Media Festival, Santa Fe, Lahore Biennial, testsite Austin, Kochi Muziris Biennale, *Be.Fantastic* in Bengaluru, *What About Art* in Mumbai, Digital Grafitti Festival in Florida, The Fusebox Festival in Texas, among others. She has been invited to research and residency programs with Fluent Collaborative Austin, the Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art, and the Institute of Advanced Studies in Nantes, France.*

Adira Thekkuveetil is an artist whose work investigates photography's entanglements with contemporary sociopolitical consciousness, especially in an urban context. She draws from family histories, archives and her own practice as a photographer to explore the lines that seemingly separate fact from fiction. Adira was a finalist for the Serendipity-Arles Grant in Lens Based Practices in 2021. Currently, she is the Course Director of Aesthetics, Criticism and Theory at Jnanapravaha Mumbai. She lives between Kolkata and Trivandrum.

■ Panel 04

Yashaswini works with both film and sound to build narratives in the form of docu-fiction. She was a resident at the Rijksakademie van beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam and a recipient of the Inlaks Scholarship to study Sound Art at the Royal College of Art, London. She recently had her first sound-based solo show at Marwan, an artist-run collective in Amsterdam. Her 2019 film, 'That Cloud Never Left', premiered at International Film Festival Rotterdam and continued to be screened at other festivals. She is currently developing a film on translations with her father of Atmanam's Tamil poems. Together with Arianna Zuanazzi, in 2021 she created a science-inspired short film titled 'I invite you', a cinematic experiment that illustrates how understanding is a process of resistance.

TALK BY DEEPA DHANRAJ

In the 1980s, Abha Bhaiya, an activist, Meera Rao, a writer, and filmmakers Deepa Dhanraj, Navroze Contractor started Yugantar, a film collective that documented movements such as tobacco strikes, issues of domestic workers and the Chipko movement. Their journey with documenting movements, began when they attended a conference. The conference brought together academics, filmmakers, union members and activists who wanted to engage with the 'women's question' based on the findings of the 1975 *Status of Women* report.

Yugantar's films were collaborative wherein the collective lived with and interviewed women who were actively participating in movements across the nation, and used their interviews to guide the films they were making. During their long durations of living in different places to shoot, they developed a rapport with the workers who eagerly shared their resources for the film. Often people would come together in thousands to re-enact the strikes to make sure their protest could be documented on camera.

Tambaku Chaakila Oob Aali (Tobacco Embers) which was screened at MAP, traces the burgeoning of tobacco strikes in Maharashtra and Karnataka in the 1980s where women came together in large numbers to fight for basic rights such as their salary, working hours and bonuses. The film also gives an insight to the discussions amongst the women. They would sit together to strategise the future of the movement and ways to bring more people to participate in the strikes.

Yugantar's films were actively circulated in the villages of Karnataka and other regions. Today, after its digitisation, the films are being re-circulated and discussed. Deepa observed that the responses to the films haven't changed as much, as domestic violence is still prevalent and not talked about so publicly.

■ Panel 05

Responding to a question on the existence of feminism in the vocabulary of local languages, Deepa noted women workers in the 1970s and 1980s were already working towards their rights and addressing sexual violence. They did not need upper-class and upper caste people to tell them what to do. These films are not didactic in their approach. Instead, they act as a means of circulating information about what was happening and in doing so, today they have become an archive of some of the significant events that happened in the 1980s.

■ Panel 05

Deepa Dhanraj is a writer and documentarian with a career spanning forty years engaging with questions related to women's status, political participation and resistance. She was one of the founding members of Yugantar, a feminist film collective that made a set of films on the political organising of women domestic workers and women tobacco factory workers. She has a special interest in education and she has worked extensively with Government schools to create pedagogy suited to problems faced by first-generation learners who come from Dalit and Adivasi communities. Her films have been screened and awarded at national and international film festivals. She has contributed papers on gender and development at national and international conferences and co-authored the book, 'Rupture, Loss and Living: Minority Women Speak About Post-Conflict Life'. She is currently working on an audiovisual archive of the student's anti-caste movement that arose in 2016 post the tragic suicide of the Dalit Phd research scholar Rohith Vemula at the University of Hyderabad.

ON OCCUPYING THE PUBLIC

Brought together by their engagement with the 'public', Jasmeen Patheja, Anpu Varkey and Ekta Mittal shared their endeavours of making a transient body like the 'public' a safer, more accessible and empowering space to be a part of.

The moderator, Laxmi Murthy began the presentation series by tracing the issues that were at the forefront of the feminist movement from the 1970s onwards. Making the 'personal political', women claimed the streets and began to share their experiences of sexual and domestic violence. Jasmeen facilitated workshops where she asked women what they felt about the phrase 'public space'. She founded Blank Noise, an initiative that brings attention to street harassment, which started the #INEVERSTARTEDIT campaign. The campaign encourages women across India to come together bringing the garments they were shamed for wearing or associated with incidents of sexual violence. By coming together through these symbolic gestures they found solidarity and companionship in one another. Jasmeen organised other such campaigns such as sleeping and laughing in public to reclaim spaces.

Anpu occupies the public space while she stands high up on a ladder. She is neither on the ground nor up in the sky; the walls of buildings are her canvas. Seeing herself as a worker on/off the streets, Anpu talked about her process of making murals on the walls of different cities. She would begin her days early in the mornings, take tea breaks at a nearby shop and eventually continue her work till the evening. In the two weeks, she would spend in an area, people would speak to her about their lives and ask her questions about her own life as a woman artist. Connecting building exteriors to the happenings in its interiors through her art, Anpu's work is easily relatable to any passerby.

She shared anecdotes of instances when parents brought their children to have her bless them. Other times people commissioned her to paint the tea shops she frequented. Anpu's playful storytelling through street walls had several responses amongst the audience who shared similar visions of one's right to express oneself be it on the walls of hospital wards or busy streets of Bengaluru.

What does one do when the right to express oneself is taken away by government bodies in the name of efficiency and beautification of the city? Ekta started Maraa in 2008 when the metro construction in Bengaluru began in the name of its 'smart cities' initiative. The systemised gentrification of the city led to protests by Pourakarmikas (waste pickers), sex workers and other working-class communities. Maraa's *Bevaru* a bi-monthly, multilingual newspaper was created as a platform to highlight the issues they were and are still facing in the city. Additionally, plays, concerts and other forms of 'leisure' for working-class audiences are organised by Maraa.

Dealing with a multi-faceted space like the 'public' can lead to questions of claim, power, control and ownership. Ekta concluded with an imagined public similar to Begum Mahal's palace which welcomed people across the spectrum of sexes, and castes, to rest and enjoy themselves in the middle of the city. One day, there should be as many places of this kind everywhere in the world.

■ Panel 06

Laxmi Murthy is a contributing editor with Himal Southasian, the region's premier political review magazine published from Colombo. Currently based in Bengaluru, she also heads the Hri Institute for South Asian Research and Exchange, a unit under the Himal banner, conducting cross-border research in South Asia. She is currently engaged in a project challenging visual depiction of violence against women in South Asia. Laxmi has worked with the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) since 2002. She is editor of the annual UNESCO-IFJ South Asia Press Freedom Report. She was deputy co-ordinator of the Sexual Violence and Impunity research and publication project anchored at feminist publishing house, Zubaan, New Delhi. Laxmi has been associated with the autonomous women's movement for more than three decades. She is co-founder of the Network of Women in Media, India, and the Free Speech Collective, a platform to promote the right to free speech and expression and lobby for journalists' rights in India.

Jasmeen Patheja is an artist in public service. She is committed to ending violence against women, girls and all persons. Patheja builds ideas for public and collective action. Initiated in response to the silence surrounding street harassment, in India and globally, Patheja founded Blank Noise as a student project in 2003. Over the 20 years, Patheja has worked with multiple communities and designed a wide range of interventions and methodologies across media to shift public consciousness towards the issue. Patheja's practice is rooted in listening to narratives of fear and gender based violence. Patheja's practice has received numerous media mentions including, The Atlantic, New York Times, and The Guardian. Patheja has exhibited her work in institutions including Ford Foundation Gallery, in New York, the Bronx Museum of Arts, and Centre For Contemporary Photography (Australia). Patheja serves as a feminist mentor in the South Asia Young Women Leadership and Mentoring programme (CREA) where she has worked with young women leaders across women's rights organisations in India. Patheja has been an artist in Residence at the Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology.

■ Panel 06

Addicted to heights, time travel and insipid barren landscapes, Anpu, since 2011 has worked on monumental public art murals across the country and abroad. She has curated many street fests for the Kochi Muziris Biennale and more recently Theruvara, a curated project with the support and initiation of Kerala Lalit Kala Akademy and the International Theatre Festival of Kerala, in Thrissur. In 2014, she self-published her first graphic book 'Jaba', which takes a look at a day in the life of her companion cat. 'Summer's Children' her second book was self-published in 2019, followed by an eponymous exhibition of Anpu Varkey's original drawings and animations at the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi, under the framework of 'Young Artists of Our Times' devised by Akansha Rastogi.

Ekta Mittal co-founded Maraa, a media and arts collective in Bengaluru in 2008 and has been working in Bengaluru, as a practitioner, researcher, curator and facilitator, drawing from the intersections of gender, labour & caste both in rural and urban contexts. She has been making films around labour, migration and cities since 2009. Her recent films Birha and Gumnaam din are about separation and longing, in the context of migration. She co-produced Main Yahan Hoon, a performance with survivors of sexual violence from MP and UP around beauty, violence and freedom. Her current preoccupation is around smell, impermanence and the process of pickling.

ON COUNTER INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICES

A conversation with Avni Sethi, Chinar Shah and Meenakshi Thirukode moderated by Shukla Sawant, discussed their positionalities on dealing with the existing infrastructures in the art world.

Avni, director of Conflictorium, shared her experiences of working in an institution like a museum and trying to critique it from within. As a museum with no collections in its possession, it pushes one to reimagine the museum as a space of transience and tension. It has presented sound installations and artworks in old factories and other places to address the discourse on conflict amongst a wider audience across India. Moreover, working with the theme of conflict, she discussed their unsuccessful struggles of engaging with the bureaucracy which acts as a censor board. As Avni leaves the position as the director of the Conflictorium, she remarked that she still believes in the power of the museum space in formulating narratives. That said, because of the power it holds, there should always be room to critique it as well.

Meenakshi works at the edges of institutional and “alternative” practices to build frameworks for what they call “a better art world”. They set up *School of Instituting Otherwise*, where they use ‘complaining’ to address the inadequacies in the art world. They built communities that collectively work towards creating knowledge systems that can be made and unmade, and recirculated. Given their vast interests in theory, practice and their way of understanding art practice, their work didn’t fit anywhere due to which they faced difficulty in getting institutional opportunities. And therefore, they built a community of their own.

■ Panel 07

Chinar shared similar experiences and established her platform *Home Sweet Home*, which she defines as non-institutional. Working out of her own apartment, *Home Sweet Home* started when she invited some of her friends to exhibit their work in her house. From then on, the mobile home became an exhibition space. As an independent artist, Chinar explained the model of *Home Sweet Home* and its aim towards providing fair pay to its artists and writers.

In the moderator session, the panellists talked about money, and where and how funding comes from. Art schools shy away from teaching their students how to earn through practice. Artists are unable to have honest conversations about how they sustain their practice and what their relationship to money is. The last panel in *Beyond Theory* ended with a relief that the elephant in the room had been addressed. What of theory when the practicalities of making the subject are not discussed?

■ Panel 07

Shukla Sawant is a multimedia visual artist and academic whose research interests include art in colonial India, postcolonial theory, South Asian modernism and contemporary art movements, photography and printmaking, new media practices and artist collectives and organisations. She was one of the founding faculty of the School of Art and Aesthetics at the Jawaharlal Nehru University and received her PhD in 2015 and has since worked as Professor of Visual Studies. Her works have been exhibited at Delhi Silpi Chakra (1986); Eicher Gallery (1995); Harriet Green Gallery, London (1997); Lakereen (2000) and Anant Art Gallery (2006, 2009).

Avni Sethi is an interdisciplinary practitioner with her primary concerns lying between cultures of violence, memory, space and the body. She conceptualised and designed, the Conflictorium, a Museum of Conflict (www.conflictorium.org) in Ahmedabad and Raipur city and Mehnat Manzil (www.mehnatmanzil.org), a museum of work situated in Ahmedabad, Gujarat in 2013, 2022 and 2019 respectively. She has been writing and speaking about the potential of small museums as a holding space for social justice processes and the necessity of building care based ecosystems. She is currently nurturing 'Ordo Performance Collaboratory' (www.ordocollaboratory.com), a studio space that focuses on performance based experimentations. She is the recipient of the Jane Lombard Prize for Art and Social Justice 2020-2022 by the Vera List Centre for Art and Politics. She currently lives and works in Ahmedabad, India.

*Chinar Shah is a Bengaluru-based artist and founder of Home Sweet Home, an online publishing platform focusing on independent initiatives in India. She has received grants from the Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation, Pronto - Göteborg Stad Kultur of the city of Gothenburg, AHRC, UK, ASAP: Art South Asia Project and Experimenter, Calcutta. She has presented her work at Tate Modern, Serendipity Arts Festival, and Kochi Biennale Collateral amongst others. She taught photography and visual arts at the Srishti Institute for Art, Design, and Technology (Bengaluru, India) and is the co-editor of *Photography in India: From Archives to Contemporary Practice* (Bloomsbury, UK, 2018).*

■ Panel 07

Meenakshi Thirukode (she/they) is an artist-curator, cultural theorist and feminist killjoy. Their areas of research focus on the role of micro-politics, culture and collectivity from the POV of a queer femme subjectivity, that's located within the realm of a trans-nomadic, transient network of individuals and institutions. They run 'School of IO (Instituting Otherwise)', as an infrastructure of the 'Otherwise', dedicated to navigating 'study', as a radical feminist tool of political agency. Their recent projects include 'Kitchen Table Talks' (2023) and 'Disorganizing Metabolisms' (2022) in collaboration with FAR (Food, Art, Research Network), the 'Here, There and Everywhere' conference at MAC Birmingham, UK (March 2018) and 'Out of Turn, Being Together Otherwise', exploring performance art histories in collaboration with Asia Art Archive (AAA) at Serendipity Arts Festival, Goa, India (December 15th-22nd 2018). Their chapter 'Towards a Public of the Otherwise', has been published in the Routledge Companion Series for Art in the Public Realm (2020). They were a Reading Resident and a contributor to the seminar US: Shaping Time at Stroom Den Haag, Hague, Netherlands (2022). They currently live in New Delhi with their two cats and a garden.

LADY ANANDI: REDUX LADY ANANDI

To conclude *Beyond Theory*, Anuja Ghosalkar performed a 'redux' version of *Lady Anandi*. The performance goes back and forth between the past and present, referencing the story of her great-grandfather who took the disguise of a female actor on the Marathi stage. She also presents the character of a struggling actor and a young fangirl. Through these characters, she raises questions about the socialisation of gendered roles that we imbibe by imitating those around us. Though the story is fictional, it is contextualised against the background of the history of Marathi theatre.

Using self-referential devices, *Lady Anandi* is a playful act of working with ideas of the body and revisiting existing work to modify the present. When she performed *Lady Anandi* at the MAP auditorium, recordings of her previous shows played on the screen behind her. They were woven into the live performance creating a montage of mixed mediums.

What was different about this performance? Anuja spoke about her experiences of performing online during the pandemic. Being outside a physical setup without an audience, changed her body. She felt different. Referencing her past was a way of acknowledging something had changed in her. Did the audience notice it too?

■ Panel 08

Anuja Ghosalkar is the founder of Drama Queen—a Documentary theatre company, evolving a multi-disciplinary form in India since 2015. Her practice focuses on little histories, archival lapses and blurring the hierarchies between audience and performer—to extend the idea of theatre to create audacious work. Her performances and workshops have been programmed by University of Oxford, Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Cambridge, Sophiensale, Serendipity Arts Festival, National Centre for Biological Sciences, Forum Transregionale –ZMO, among others. She is the co-curator of VR based performances for the Serendipity Arts Virtual 2020 and recently designed and facilitated an online course on Digital Documentary Theatre for the Serendipity Arts Foundation.