A photograph of a dimly lit, rustic room. The walls are made of rough, textured material, possibly plaster or mud. A window with vertical bars is on the right wall, letting in bright light that casts shadows on the wall. A simple wooden chair is positioned in the center of the room. The overall atmosphere is quiet and contemplative.

Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2022-23
Satellite Exhibition

a place
at the
table

curated by Tanya Abraham



tAOS the art
outreach
society

11th December 2022 to
10th April 2023

TAOS Gallery,
Devassy Jose & Sons
Warehouse,
Bazar Road, Mattancherry

a place at the table

curated by **Tanya Abraham**



The exhibition "A Place at the Table" concerns memory, ideology, gender roles and situated knowledges brought to light through community-participatory work, and the works of 25 artists. The exhibition was developed in layers, each intersecting with the other with the aim of creating a powerful narrative aimed at audience emancipation. The project took into account the idea of memory (recalling memory), and the juxtaposition of various realms of art and levels of experiences to create a unified experience aimed towards emancipation. The overall experience was aimed, to be impactful, one recalled in significance.

The first part of the exhibition concerned nine panels placed on the main public street of the biennale (Bazar Road) titled "I Hear the Echo", sound works made accessible via QR codes. A digital platform allowed participants to partake in the project through their own perceptions uploaded as texts, images, videos or sounds. This concerned the idea of Memory and Location, how location plays a significant role in shaping memory and vice versa: the position of environments and communities in creating a memory. The idea of memory and its understanding was intended to flow into the gallery located on the street.

In the entrance room of the TAOS gallery, the food-based experimental work and the three-art works (two audio works and one audio-visual work), which were derived from them, act as a prelude to the exhibition. This project became the foundation upon which the fulcrum of the exhibition was built, a participatory community-based project titled "Who Put Out the Fire?" where six artists were invited to work with six homemakers (of different backgrounds, cultures and economic strata) in the region of the biennale. After three months of work, seven films captured the intimate nuances of these women and their stories within their kitchens. The remaining six works at the exhibition were "pulled out" from this central project, each work speaking of various nuances connected to women, patriarchy and gender roles/identity.



I hear the echo

A part of the project called 'A Place at the Table; Where is Amma?', nine individual panels in consecutive arrangement on Bazaar Road, are individual sound works by artists that urge participants to find immersion in them by allowing sound to evoke, to imagine, and to connect through fine nuances, permitting the recalling of memories. In the evoking of memories, this embodied experience urges one to move thus to a position of recollection. In this recalling, rises the force with which one is able to kindle and set in motion a new understanding, the shedding of generational perceptions upon which social constructs rest. Bazaar Road, its sights and sounds, its profound history, and the artists' expressions of memories bring forth an amalgamation of experiences here, which provide the impetus to begin to encounter something new, through the reminiscence of the antecedent.





1

Paul Natraj (London, UK)

Cobblestones & Kitchari

Duration: 7:28 mins

'Cobblestones & Kitchari', gives us a unique insight into the relationship between recorded sound, memory, and identity, with regard to personal rituals of listening and coping with grief. Keightley and Pickering argue that 'what is remembered changes, and what is experienced changes what is remembered.' (Keightley and Pickering, 2006). In this conception, creating memory around acts of listening is a dynamic, non-generic and labile process, especially when connected to the emotion of a traumatic event. The memory of a song then is the merging of spaces, places and objects, it is skewed repetition, it is voices unremembered, fragile and moving, timbres rather than words,

one-sided conversation, echoes and the liminal intersections of dreams, perception, reality and emotion, as Connor reminds us 'we hear...the event of the thing, not the thing itself.' (Connor, 2001)

'Cobblestones & Kitchari' was written over several years just after my father passed away in Jan 2013. All the source material and compositional choices on the record are related to him and his sonic memories. Each track constitutes a personal ritual of remembrance, where the manipulations of recorded sound are used to co-produce a memory of sound which tries to locate a moment of listening but is aware of its fleeting nature. These sonic memories coalesce around words, move across worlds and drift as people do, into and out of our senses, becoming either absent or present or sometimes both. The sounds add to the layers of identity that we accrue, over time, they become tangled into the fabric of who we are and therefore inform the rituals of our everyday lives.

2

Sethu Venugopal (Mumbai, India)

Memories

Duration: 5 mins

The work is a means of recollecting memories of suburban cityscapes that include a fish market and our unconscious ambulation through mechanical rhythms that create a pattern.

A series of non-narrative motifs of sounds continuously lead us to make random associations with memories of the past. In the absence of the visual, this soundtrack attempts to look at how an aural stimulus might assist in creating a notional memory of the future. An attempt at exploring the difference between reproducing our ambiances in unreal spaces like a cinema hall and replaying everyday sounds that one might not necessarily notice as being part of one's psycho-acoustic memory.

3

Audra Wolowiec (New York, USA)

say the sea

Duration: 3 mins

“say the sea” is a participatory sound project. It was created to invite the formation of a chorus, a collective body of sound, through creating the sound of the ocean with one’s voice or breath. The sound recordings are gathered through an open submission process and are available to listen to at saythesea.com. The work exhibited here is a single sound work created out of the many public recordings gathered by the artist.

4

Balint Komenczi (Budapest, Hungary)

Merged

Duration: 2:52 mins

My sound installation is based on two field recordings made in Budapest, Hungary where I live. The two materials had been recorded in the same place but at different times. The first one was during the pandemic restrictions (we had the possibility to visit markets and other public facilities while keeping strict rules), and the second one was after the strict regulations were over but when public places still remained quiet. The place of the recordings is the largest and oldest Hungarian market hall. The Grand Market Hall in Budapest was built in 1896 and

since then it has played an important role in the capital’s busy life. The hall is situated next to the Danube River; in days of yore small ships could ply the building’s basement through an underground stream. The sounds captured resonate with the nuances of the building in its original form, it represents the acoustics of the 19th century which the listener can now experience, a possibility only when the market fell silent. During the pandemic everything changed, and so did sounds. Public buildings seemed to be perfect places to grasp the sound of the absence of people, the sound of silence. Any other time, the soundscape is a buzzy environment with sounds from various sources. The gaping silence which persisted for the last two years lured me to create an acoustic illusion of vivid life in the middle of the pandemic as I mixed the two recordings to create the illusion of people around me. The mix of the two recordings symbolically overwrote the memory of the pandemic’s frozen world.

5

Ruth Viguera Bravo (Mexico City, Mexico)

**At the end of the road,
life is Red**

Sound assembly, 2020

Duration: 4 mins

Entre-Deux is a multi-channel sound installation of collected memories on the notion of home and displacement. I often feel that I exist somewhere in between, neither here nor there. Elsewhere. No doubt a common feeling for people who have lived in more than one country. I wonder, how do we define ‘home’? Is it a place? Perhaps in

our mother country or where we have settled in our current home. Is it a feeling? Perhaps found in the warmth of family. Or, is it a memory? A smell or a sound that triggers us to reminisce on something that once was. Through a participatory process I received anonymously written musings at home, I then employed new voices to read them and will present them in an interwoven sound installation. As distinctive as each iteration is, there are a few underlying collective notions: Home is a place where... From the place that I was born... The closer we come to finding... To the comfort and familiarity of... These notions of origination, return, and security makes up chapters of voices, which will be projected into the exhibition space through standing speakers. Where one voice pauses, another chimes in offering their perspective.





6

Rounak Maiti (New Delhi, India)

Joshua

Duration: 7:23 mins

‘Marked by loss, isolation and yet ultimately optimism, Hey Angels is a document of the inherent subjectivity in memories and storytelling, ultimately questioning whether differentiating between truth and subjectivity

matters. The artist was commissioned by Sam Boullier to make a few original score pieces for his experimental documentary/fiction film Hey Angels. To create the soundtrack, he was provided sounds from the valley and field recordings captured by Sam and was instructed to create a sound composition that took sonic elements of these memories and interplayed them with music. Creating contemplative textures that recapitulated the field recordings and imbued them with long-winding melodies, layers of processing and abstraction were used to reimagine the songwriting process into a speculative, film-scoring technique.

7

Denise Lee &
Eleftheria Panousi
(Germany & Greece)

**From here to there
(or somewhere else)**

Duration: 5:30 mins

“From here to there” is a migrating sound piece created by artists Denise Lee and Eleftheria Panousi. What makes the difference between a model minority and a threat? Why do we forget so easily the root causes of forced migration?

Why do people leave their homes to find their place in other societies? Who has the power? From the Pontics of the Black Sea to the Chinese diaspora, this collaborative, migrating sound piece wanders through the city, weaving together the micro and the macro and drawing on generational memory through changes in location and context. Found audio provides a sonic, historical, and cultural backdrop for the text, while the artists draw from their own heritages of migration and intersperse personal and familial narratives with historical and political context, connecting these histories by questioning current attitudes toward migration. layers of processing and abstraction were used to reimagine the songwriting process into a speculative, film-scoring technique.

8

Ojasvi Peshawaria & Chris Luiz Anderson

(Bangalore, India)

Ebb 2018

Duration: 5:14 mins

'Ebb' employs the medium of sound to evoke other senses, triggering almost physical effects. In the absence of any material

information or visual clues, its fluid soundscape, heightened by the use of audio tracking techniques, is activated by suggestive imagery and the listeners' imagination as well as personal and shared memories. Nothing is certain or defined here. What are these sounds, sometimes like rain and at other times like flood? How do specific standpoints and subjectivities inform our perceptions of these sounds of water that are so familiar and so ubiquitous?

These sounds induce particularly powerful associations with histories, struggles, suffering and solidarities that have been engendered by a permanent and inevitable engagement with water.

9

Freya Powell (New York, USA)

"Entre-Deux: From the place that I was born"

Binaural sound, 2017

Duration: 7:17 mins

Entre-Deux is a multi-channel sound installation of collected memories on the notion of home and displacement. I often feel that I exist somewhere in between, neither here nor there. Elsewhere. No doubt a common feeling for people who have lived in more than one country. I wonder, how do we define 'home'? Is it a place? Perhaps in

our mother country or where we have settled in our current home. Is it a feeling? Perhaps found in the warmth of family. Or, is it a memory? A smell or a sound that triggers us to reminisce on something that once was.

Through a participatory process I received anonymously written musings at home, I then employed new voices to read them and will present them in an interwoven sound installation. As distinctive as each iteration is, there are a few underlying collective notions: Home is a place where... From the place that I was born... The closer we come to finding... To the comfort and familiarity of... These notions of origination, return, and security makes up chapters of voices, which will be projected into the exhibition space through standing speakers. Where one voice pauses, another chimes in offering their perspective.







8113948451

a place at the table

a place at the table

a place at the table



Mario D'Souza (Paris, France)
Home away from Home

Organic indigo ink, varied dimensions
 Site-specific

This is a story to understand the essence of one's identity, a combination of the self with the other, which deals with compromise and adaption, a journey of changing one's home, stretching it to feel at home in that given, chosen space, the idea of movement, torment seen through colour and food. During this process of adaptation, new languages and new rituals are learnt, and new flavours are discovered. Years of learning and unlearning finally allow comfort. Life slowly becomes a composition of work and encounters, created through sharing, and understanding the dilemma of moving, of change, from one home to another.

For over two decades, creating a 'Home away from Home' has been my mantra and daily practice. Being Indian-French and someone who melts two very distinct cultural identities, I am acutely sensitive to interpersonal and societal separations that arise due to differences in cultures and backgrounds. This becomes the backdrop in creating a 'home away from home'.

There are several elements and mediums that I use to represent the core of my beliefs, and which I bring as a common thread to all my art.

Through the prism of art, these mediums have become metaphors for my message. One of these is my hands: they represent the screen through which I see life. Hands and their function in someone's life reflect their psychology and inner attitude. Whether we see hands that work, dig and plant on the Earth, hands in rituals, or hands in movement; the hands bring the inner essence to work. They are the fabric of human labour.

The recurring element that I find myself exploring oftentimes is colour, also texture; these two elements add identity. Observing how these elements embedded in their cultural symbolism are routinely used and expressed by the people I interact with, has guided me and become the substance of inspiration for my philosophy and in the creation of my artwork. At the source, becoming enveloped in culture and a part of people's experience is what I seek to share and portray in my art and is also what depicts the core of my swadharna, 'home away from home'.



2

What happens when we gather around the table?
In 2020, during the height of the Covid Pandemic,
six persons invited guests to share a meal in their
homes; and three artists shared works on the
happenings surrounding the (kitchen) tables.

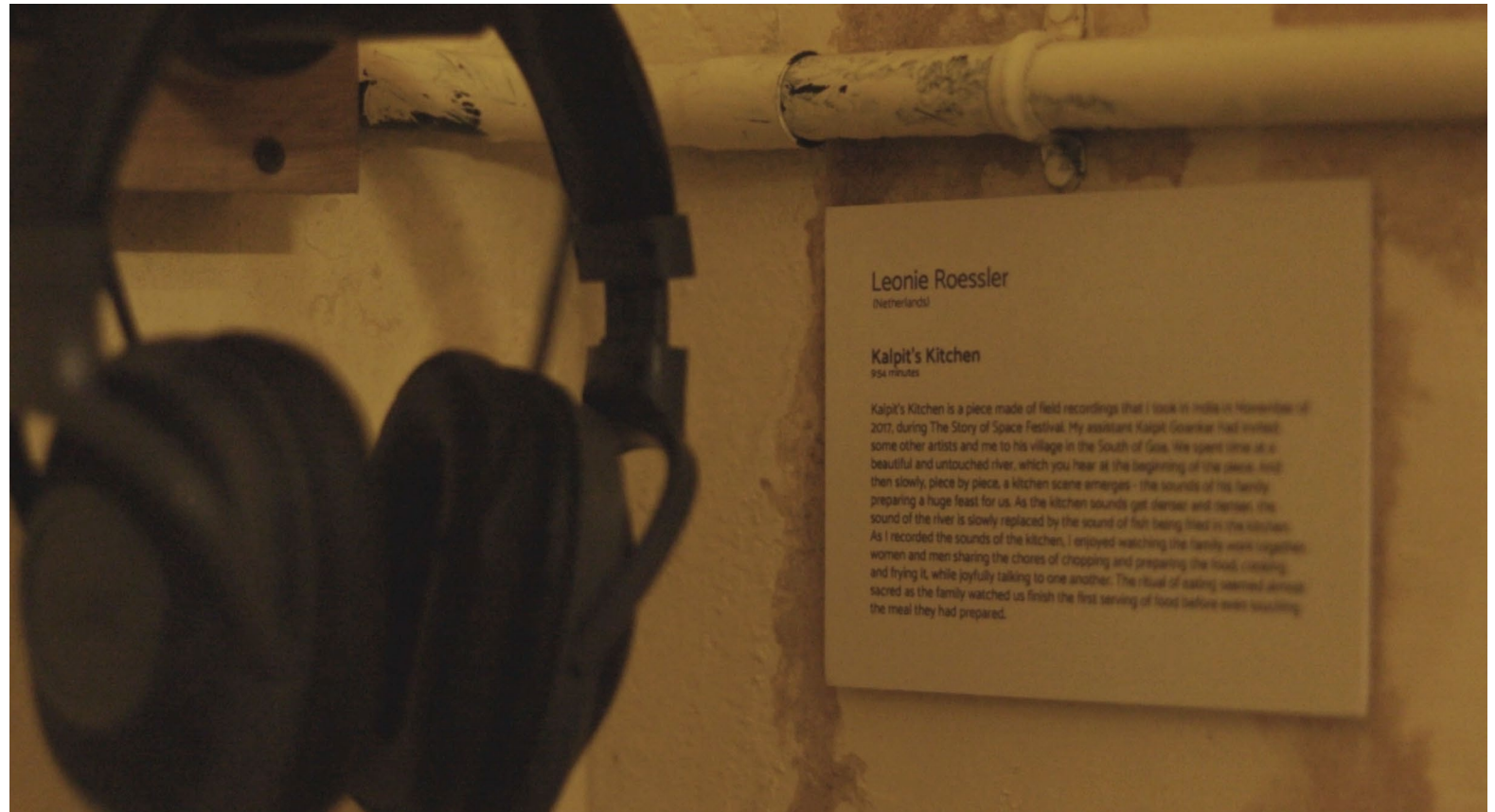
Public Participants:

Blessy John
Diwia Thomas
Preea Mathai
Shobha Jose
Sumathi Raja
Tamina George

Leonie Roessler
(Netherlands)

Kalpit's Kitchen
Duration: 9:54 mins

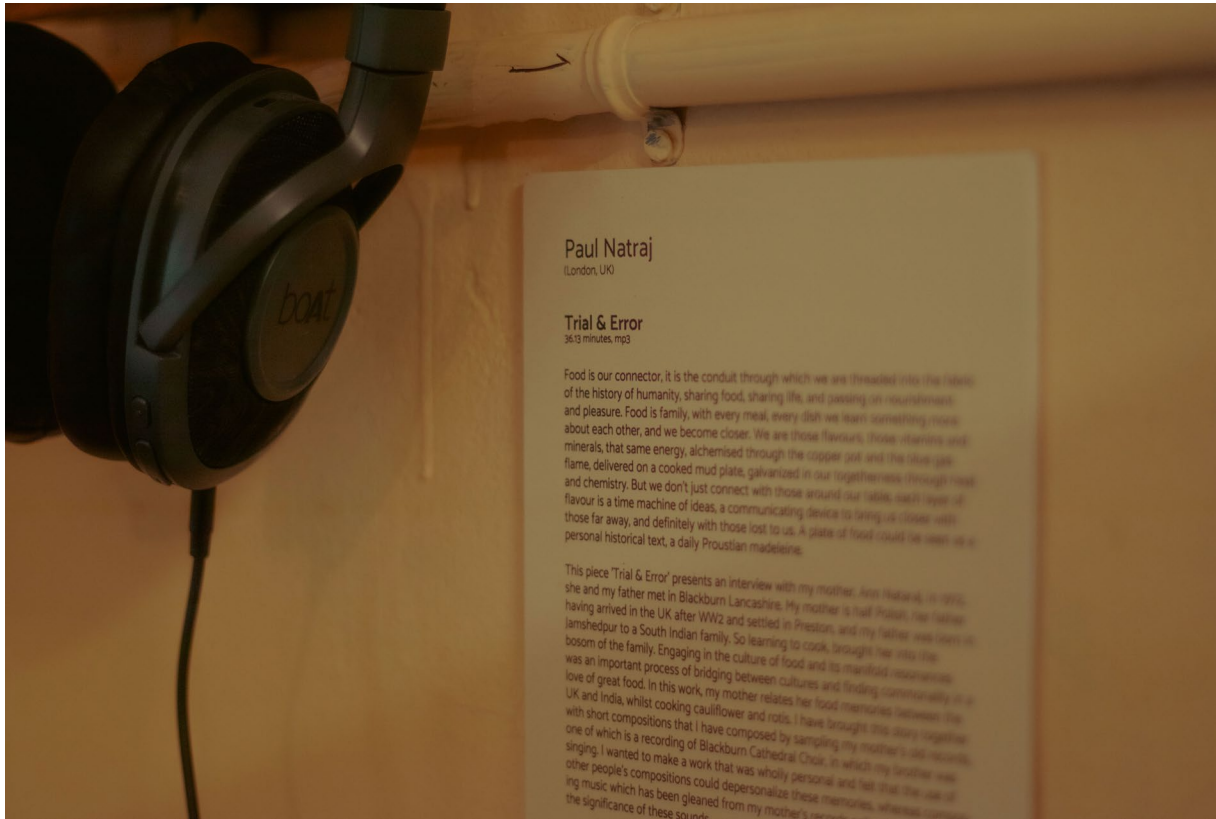
Kalpit's Kitchen is a piece made of field recordings that I took in India in November of 2017, during The Story of Space Festival. My assistant Kalpit Goankar had invited some other artists and me to his village in the South of Goa. We spent time at a beautiful and untouched river, which you hear at the beginning of the piece. And then slowly, piece by piece, a kitchen scene emerges - the sounds of his family preparing a huge feast for us. As the kitchen sounds get denser and denser, the sound of the river is slowly replaced by the sound of fish being fried in the kitchen. As I recorded the sounds of the kitchen, I enjoyed watching the family work together, women and men sharing the chores of chopping and preparing the food, cooking and frying it, while joyfully talking to one another. The ritual of eating seemed almost sacred as the family watched us finish the first serving of food before even touching the meal they had prepared.



Leonie Roessler
(Netherlands)

Kalpit's Kitchen
9:54 minutes

Kalpit's Kitchen is a piece made of field recordings that I took in India in November of 2017, during The Story of Space Festival. My assistant Kalpit Goankar had invited some other artists and me to his village in the South of Goa. We spent time at a beautiful and untouched river, which you hear at the beginning of the piece. And then slowly, piece by piece, a kitchen scene emerges - the sounds of his family preparing a huge feast for us. As the kitchen sounds get denser and denser, the sound of the river is slowly replaced by the sound of fish being fried in the kitchen. As I recorded the sounds of the kitchen, I enjoyed watching the family work together, women and men sharing the chores of chopping and preparing the food, cooking and frying it, while joyfully talking to one another. The ritual of eating seemed almost sacred as the family watched us finish the first serving of food before even touching the meal they had prepared.



Paul Natraj (London, UK)

Trial & Error

Duration: 36:13 mins

Food is our connector, it is the conduit through which we are threaded into the fabric of the history of humanity, sharing food, sharing life, and passing on nourishment and pleasure. Food is family, with every meal, every dish we learn something more about each other, and we become closer. We are those flavours, those vitamins and minerals, that same energy, alchemised through the copper pot and the blue gas flame, delivered on a cooked mud plate, galvanized in our togetherness through heat and chemistry. But we don't just connect with those around our table, each layer of flavour is a time machine of ideas, a communicating device to bring us closer with those far away, and definitely with those lost to us. A plate of food could be seen as a personal historical text, a daily Proustian madeleine.

This piece 'Trial & Error' presents an interview

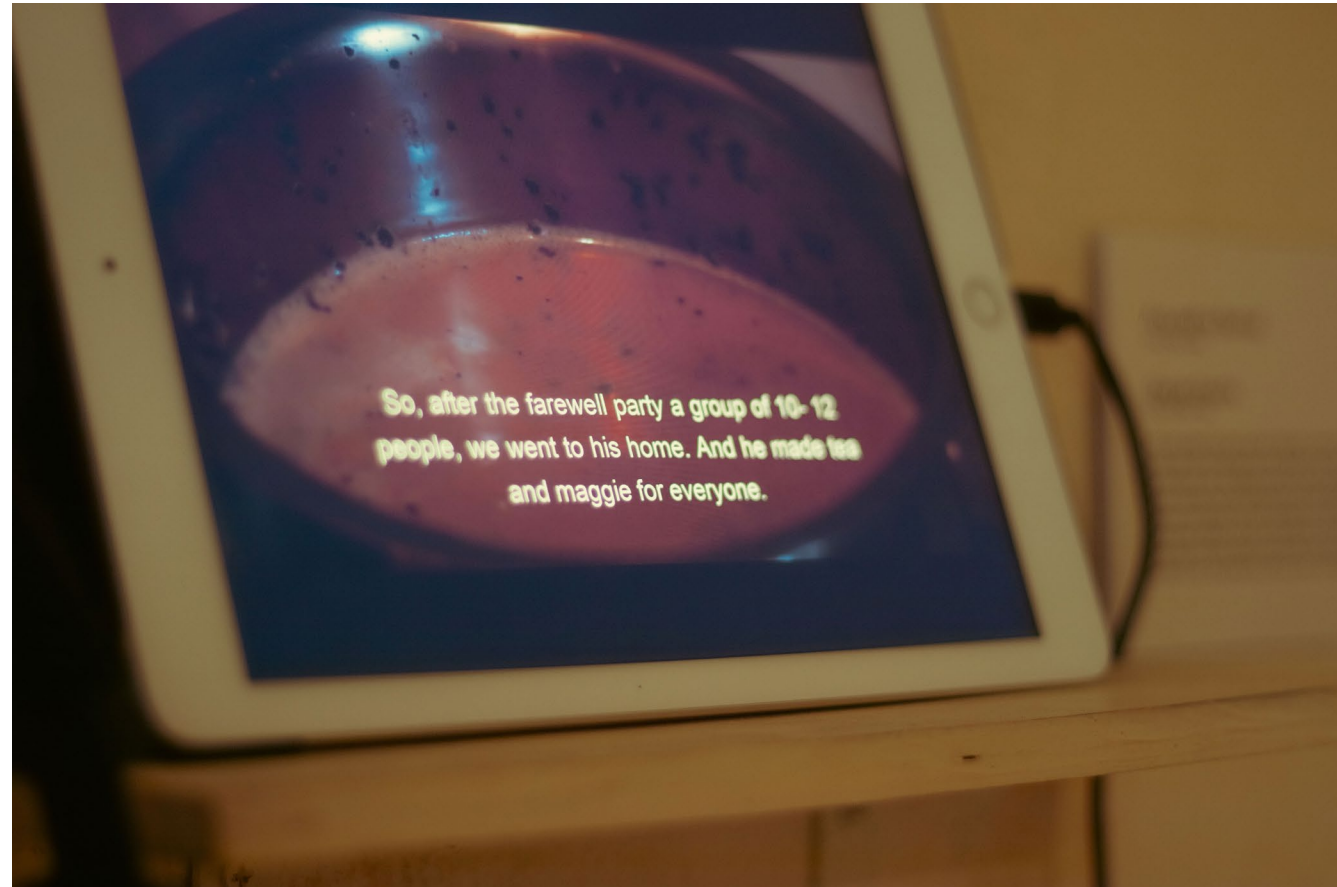
with my mother, Ann Nataraj. In 1972, she and my father met in Blackburn Lancashire. My mother is half Polish, her father having arrived in the UK after WW2 and settled in Preston, and my father was born in Jamshedpur to a South Indian family. So learning to cook, brought her into the bosom of the family. Engaging in the culture of food and its manifold resonances was an important process of bridging between cultures and finding commonality in a love of great food. In this work, my mother relates her food memories between the UK and India, whilst cooking cauliflower and rotis. I have brought this story together with short compositions that I have composed by sampling my mother's old records, one of which is a recording of Blackburn Cathedral Choir, in which my brother was singing. I wanted to make a work that was wholly personal and felt that the use of other people's compositions could depersonalize these memories, whereas composing music which has been gleaned from my mother's records collection maintains the significance of these sounds.

Anuradha Bansal (New Delhi, India)

Chai pe Charcha

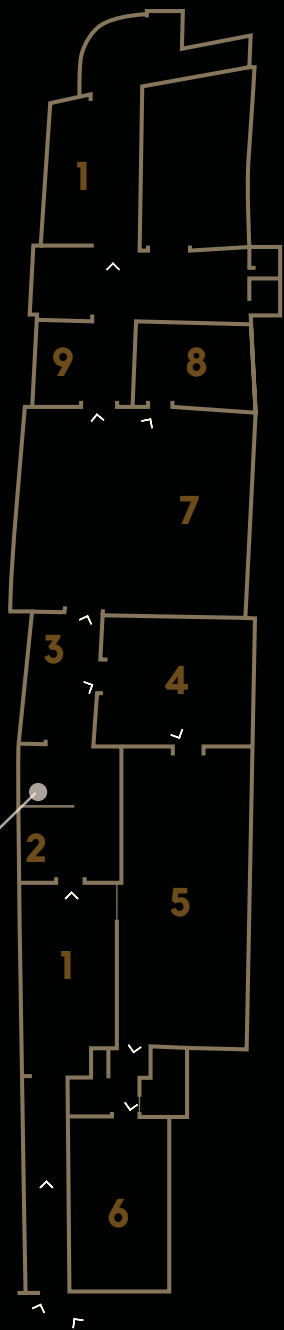
DSLR HD 1920*1080

My work titled 'Chai pe Charcha' (meaning conversations over tea) recalls India's centuries-old tea heritage and the impact it has had on its culture. In this work, a conversation over tea replays events and social gossip. The film is made from sound bytes recorded over phone discussion and tied together through strategic editing, between two friends. This work provides the nuances of simple conversations which find greater delight in the act of drinking tea, tea being an important component of everyday life in India. Whilst social events over tea are impossible during the Covid 19 pandemic, tea conversations continue over the telephone.



a place at the table

where is amma?



This exhibition stems from my various dialogues with women over the years, one which resonates with a world of inequality, patriarchy, and power struggles. The experimental works included and the public art installation define the background of this exhibition, which urges the public to draw its nuances from them for its viewing, with focus on gender identities, body relations, and the possibilities for the creation of new dialogues, relations, and alliances, intended towards the unveiling of constructed societal paradigms.

The title *A Place at the Table* reminisces the position of women as the subaltern, it also concerns a complex narrative and reveals a precarious position replete with secrets and politics associated with customs and traditions. Socio-cultural frameworks, which position women to accept roles assigned to them irrefutably, are ancient ideologies and dogmas, which tightly weave these into the intricate fabric of society. It urges the audience to view, examine, and query by peeling the layers involved in the artworks and reviewing them through their own previous experiences, each dictated by socio-cultural utterances. Where is Amma? (Where is Mother?) is a common and often made statement by children pan India irrespective of society and community. However, it concerns a complex narrative, and the term Amma is used here as a universal embodiment of the female, precious in the eyes of a child yet projected as an object by patriarchy. Amma's role in the kitchen, her connection to generational archives of her position as a woman through memory extends to query numerous other aspects associated with her: her body, duality of roles, her memoirs... For this project to evolve, discussions with anthropologists, artists and the public at large were shared with the participating artists, permitting the rising of a multi-flavoured

recognition of socio-cultural establishments upon which identity narratives were built.

The complexity in the structuring of this project coaxes the audience to partake in the process through an inclusive and embodied experience, moving through the process. The body of public artworks titled *I Hear the Echo* is a translation of artists' perspectives of memory urging the audience to sense its details through their own recollections and the envisaged understanding of the ancient town of Kochi where the works are exhibited via panels. The referred-to complexity is also viewed through the lens of ephemeral art creation created by select artists who co-produced their works with homemakers in the Fort Kochi-Mattancherry region for a collective expression of situated gender understandings titled *'Who Put Out the Fire?'* Memory becomes a key ingredient as it is revisited to shift understandings and sieve perceptions; each artistic work provides a glimpse into the complexities of gender identities, expanding from their labyrinth in the kitchen as a space largely seen for the woman/women of a household in India.

The layers of the project overlap each other in a varied and dynamic rhythm, the forces amalgamating or retreating from each other with the viewer as the central but invisible protagonist. Each work at the gallery queries and expresses the strength and heaviness of the concerned subject, allowing the possibilities of a nexus of emotions to surface from an archive of (hidden) meanings.

Tanya Abraham
Curator
Kochi, India



table

where is amma?



Muriel Moreau (Saou, France)

Chevelure

Textile Sculpture, Cotton

*Chevelure (French): Tresses or Head of hair

Chevelure appeals in our imagination to several semantics related to undulation, sensuality, fluidity and our link to the Living. It is these different sensations that I wish to show through the creation of a textile installation of white cotton yarns, original material used in traditional weaving looms run by a group of women in the town of Pattambi in Kerala. The installation with these successive layers of yarns deployed in the space evokes the image of water, the point of origin of all things, a symbol of femininity and life. I bring the visitors away towards fluidic metaphors between the

image of the hair on the head - La Chevelure, and the movement of water, the current, the immensity of the sea, the falling rain, the horizon and a sensation of infinity. The creation of a large form by a juxtaposition and interweaving of white yarns could suggest also a system of rhizomes, which according to the philosopher, Gilles Deleuze designates a circulation of states, the structure that is constantly evolving, like a root that spreads out to meet other roots, a flamboyant vegetal analogy that makes it possible to think of the existence of all things and all natures as a chaotic connection of the thousand strata and infinite networks of reality. Working the yarn evokes the link between humans. This installation invites us to reconnect with each other, to the matter that surrounds us to take our destiny in hand.



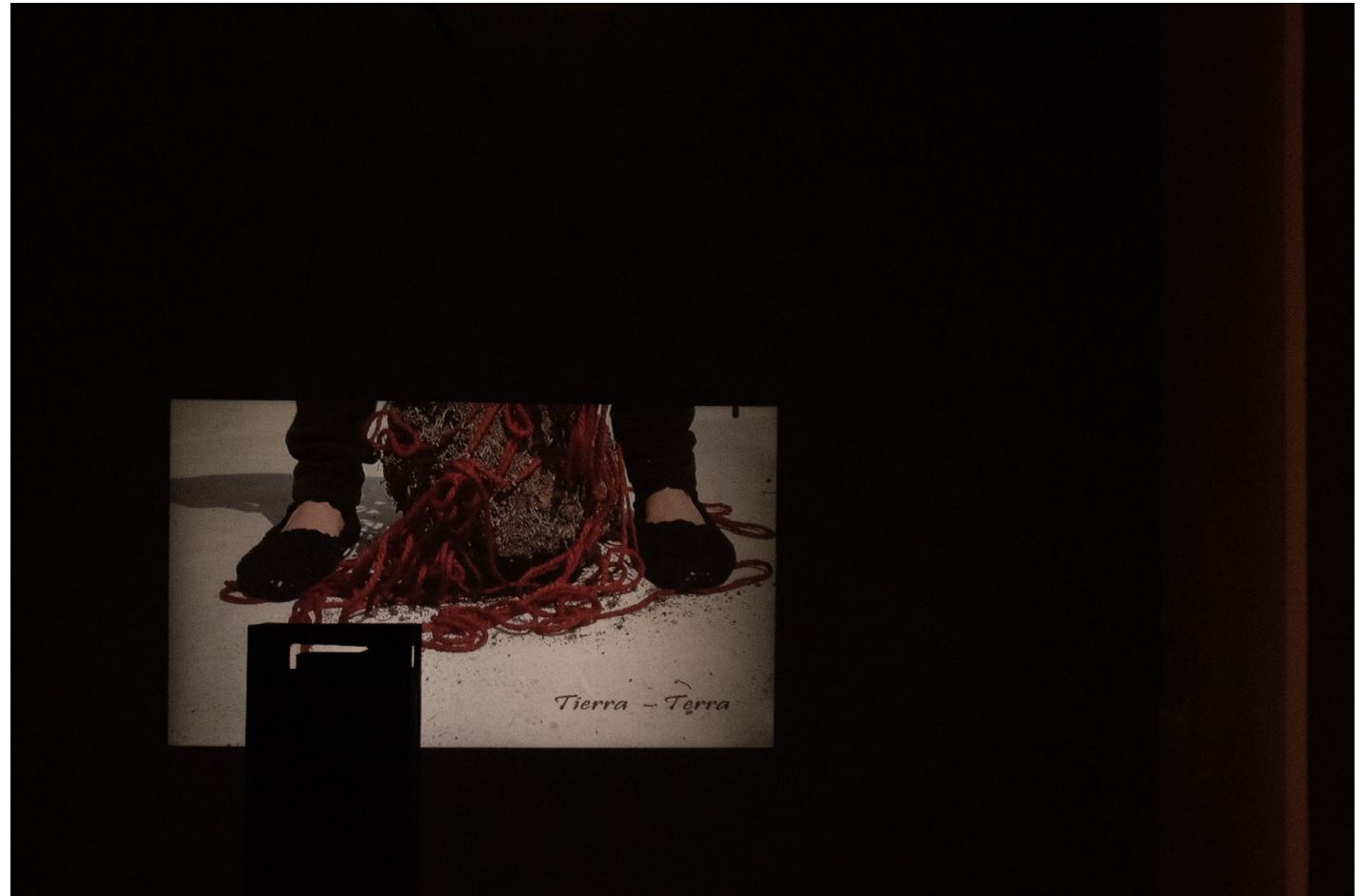
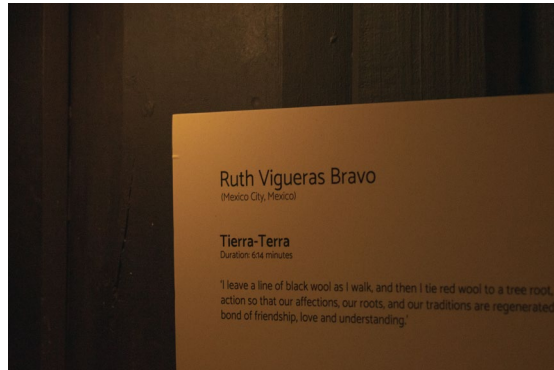
4

Ruth Viguera Bravo (Mexico City, Mexico)

Tierra - Tierra

Duration: 6:14 minutes

'I leave a line of black wool as I walk, and then I tie red wool to a tree root, a psychomagic action so that our affections, our roots, and our traditions are regenerated, in an affective bond of friendship, love and understanding.'





Diana Grabowska
(Warsaw, Poland)

MASK (I)

Cotton, silk, spandex, plastic, 2015/16
21x17x23 cm
VIDEO 3:36 minutes

"My intention was to show the head as another intimate part of the body which I cover similarly. I reshaped authentic underwear to mask the head to bring associations with intimacy and nudity. I used small magnets to create a mobile construction. The process of undressing ultimately turns out to be a peculiar form of striptease which puts the observer in the position of a voyeur. In fact, the real strip show will take place when all magnets demagnetise and the structure falls apart into small pieces."



MASK (II)

Fabric, plastic, metal, 3D print, 2018
21 x 17 x 23 cm
VIDEO 5:35 minutes

"The work focuses on the phenomenon of representation and the relationship between visual presence and real absence. It bridges material reality, where a person leaves tangible traces, which nevertheless, communicate little about the individual, and metaphysical reality, where the form of such a trace is simultaneously attractive and disturbing to the sense of security."

Diana Grabowska's Mask (I) depicts a multi-dimensional perspective of gender situatedness, the delicacy and intimacy of the lingerie she uses as a prop, and exhibits the nuances associated with it. The idea of demagnetisation she highlights in the work urges the audience to a point of falling apart to find the revelation of the situatedness.

Mask (II) finds importance in what is revealed and what is hidden, what is visible to the eye, and what is not, and the difficulty in moving away from the sense of security and belonging (ideologies, cultural frameworks...), which creates an almost adamant unwillingness for change.

Voices

Sound Sculpture

This sound sculpture is an experience of resonance, which details the human experience as multi-dimensional. Each sound work here is the nine works exhibited as public artworks on Bazaar Road, which come together to provide an amalgamated experience. Moving towards or away from a sound work reveals the effect on the human mind, human perceptions being moulded by the impact of the influence. The works form a central whole at a given point in the room as they juxtapose to form a single experience of auditory harmony. Moving towards an individual work raises its auditory presence and dims with distance.

This work exhibits the powerful influences of ideologies which mould the human mind and behaviour, and the intensity of impact which is dependent on the severity of their presence in human lives. It examines the impact of a web of ideologies and beliefs, which construct social frameworks and dictate human knowledge. The point of juxtaposition of the works represents the position, which possesses the seamless merger of situated ideas, which also houses the position possessed by the individual within the intricate web. Becoming the resting point at which the social framework functions, a movement away from it produces a set of new positions producing a completely varied result.

Tanya Abraham

Sound Designer: Arun Varma & Navin Varkey

ARTISTS:

Paul Natraj
 Sethu Venugopal
 Ojasvi Peshawaria and Chris Anderson Luiz
 Balint Komenczi
 Audra Wolowiec
 Ruth Viguera Bravo
 Freya Powell
 Rounak Maiti
 Denise Lee & Eleftheria Panousi



7



'who put out the fire?'

Public Participatory Art Project

Memory of customs and traditions within which gender identities are created, questions the position of women in relation to their kitchens. "Who Put Out the Fire?" concerns (ephemeral) artworks in house-kitchens in the Mattancherry/Fort Kochi area. In this project, along with the artists, women used their kitchens as expressions of their lived experiences; questioning not only their relationship with them, but also the possibilities of the spaces as symbols of political reasoning and ideologies. It extends the nuances of (generational) memory to aspects concerning deliberate constructs, placing gender-based identity in very specific roles, in society.

From an anthropological need of Kerala's current socio-cultural scenario, gender roles and positioning are queried and eventually broken and opened up to reveal layers of her identity and existence, where archives of stories for generations of women of a household surface.

The kitchen is viewed as a place of power and freedom, or as a place of bondage and constraint. This multidimensional position that the kitchen possesses becomes the fulcrum upon which negotiations are made, to deconstruct and recreate a new paradigm regarding gender identities and positioning in society.

The films made by the participating artists capture the essence of the project's process and intent through an artistic dialogue, which occurs between the women of the kitchens, the artists, and eventually the audience.

The process in the kitchens has been transcribed here as films, each depicting a story, a situation, and a query.

Conceptualised and Curated by
Tanya Abraham



The three-month project dated from September 2022 to November 2022, involving the local community and the artists.

Link: [PROJECT MAKING](#)



Murali Cheeroth (Bangalore, India)
Home – Other spaces

Duration: 5:20 mins

A kitchen is a cosmos that we often fail to understand, which is not even identified as a space. A kitchen has a feminist geography that we often fail to realize. Even if it is identified, it is identified as the 'other space', which has roots in the gender construction of the male dominated world. But in reality it is an integral space that links home and other spaces. Simultaneously, it is the space often invaded by the male hegemony. However, a kitchen does not

have a door or corridor to take a woman out to the open space. Still every woman yearns for a way out from the virtual confines of the kitchen where every object is a virtual shackle. A space that is cleaned more frequently than other spaces, it still remains stained – from cooking to dishwashing to the umpteen types of wastes thrown here and there. However, in most of the cases it is the most badly designed space, which again underscores the male-hegemonic idea that a kitchen is just a space that should remain within the veil. My experience has taught me that the kitchen is the ultimate space to trace other spaces that remain unmarked. It is the window to the outer space of life.



Priti Vadakkath (Kochi, India)
The Good Wife's Guide Grind

Duration: 7 mins

Collaborators:

Shamila Ashkar and Rukkiya Umma

I was keen to explore the duality that exists within the kitchen space. A space that allows for nourishment and nurture and is the anchor that keeps the home rooted together. While at the same time it is a room that literally and

symbolically keeps the woman within the confines of the four walls of domesticity.

Mouths don't get fed, clothes washed and vessels cleaned all on it's own, someone has to do it. It is a daily grind. My aim was to spotlight, validate and bring to public view this sisyphian task of domesticity, passed on from one generation to the next. Not by apotheosising it as the ultimate act of femininity, but by portraying it as is- a powerful everyday undertaking of physical labour, borne out of love.



Babu Eshwar Prasad

(Bangalore/Delhi, India)

Eat With Your Eyes

Duration: 5:16 mins

Collaborator:

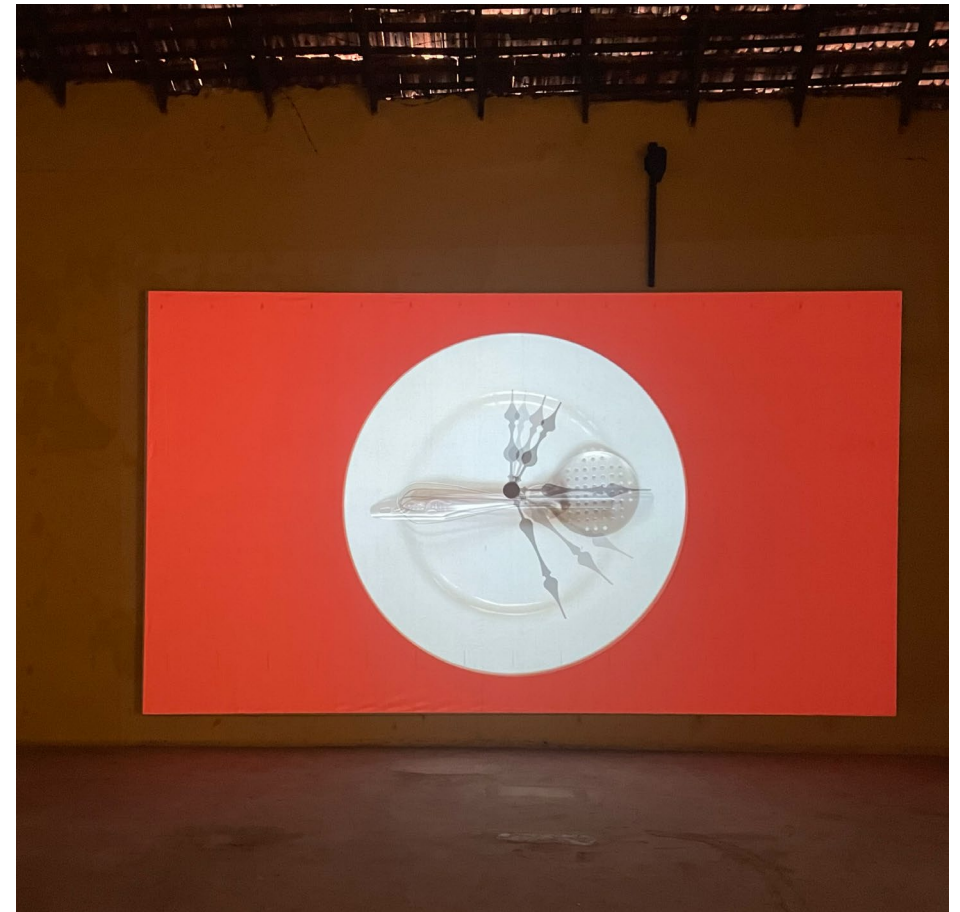
Jeena Biju

I was paired with Jeena Biju – as part of this five day public participatory art project where an artist engaged with a local resident in her kitchen. The conversations opened up slowly as Jeena admitted she didn't really care for cooking. Frames from Jeanne Dielman... (Chantal Akerman's opus) as well as the more recent The Great Indian Kitchen came to me as Jeena spoke of the everyday drudgery and the invisible labour that she performed. The story had been told before in both factual and cinematic renditions. She didn't respond to any of familiar prompts I placed before her – of cooking for the camera or sharing recipes. She

seemed weary about the repetitive, unyielding routines of the everyday and how they seemed to mark both time and space.

As I recorded her audio, she opened up slowly about the things that she loved. Baking emerged as the other to cooking. She shared images of her spectacularly decorated 'art cakes' that she used to make on an order basis. I thought it would be fitting to end with these beautiful creations as they were a testimony to her own creative process and the joy she experienced in making them.

The collaboration itself was interesting in terms of what it means to enter into someone's home and also probe into their relationship with cooking. So many dynamics involved in asking this seemingly 'simple question'. The sharing and the withholding were both part of it. The short film is a homage to Jeena's grandmother Anna Baby Joseph who sadly passed away in 2021 from COVID. Even as she doesn't finally figure in the film itself, the love and memories Jeena shared with her suffused the whole process.





Sanchayan Ghosh

(Santiniketan/Kolkata, India)

Crab Roast Story

Duration: 8:19 mins

Collaborator:

Viji Ramesh

Facilitated by Taos and curated by Tanya Abraham this present short time based participatory process was initiated between Viji Ramesh a homemaker in Fort Cochin and Sanchayan Ghosh a visual artist pedagogue from Santiniketan. Any form of participatory art process involves a dialogic engagement of multiple participants. There is an attempt to take process beyond the hegemony of individual authorship and transform it into a collaboration of making and learning together. In this respect the process is further expanded towards the making of a film where the presence of the camera become an integral part of the process and become an active component beyond the traditional role of a documentary. Viji Ramesh is not only a homemaker but also a professional chef in the office of Kochi Biennale in Fort Cochin. Viji aspires to open her own you tube channel of cooking and that she has a special interest in documenting her process of cooking for public sharing. Sanchayan Ghosh is also a visual artist who engages with pedagogy as a tool to initiate individual and collective spaces of making and learning together. The participatory process was initiated through an online offline process where multiple online meetings were initiated between Viji and Sanchayan to know each other's interest before the physical meeting of working together for six days in Viji's kitchen in Kochin.

Initially the process of interaction started with this verbal interaction of knowing each

other's practice and Sanchayan shared the basic intention of his visit to the kitchen of Viji and it was also informed that the process of physical meeting will be recorded for a film in future. During the conversation Sanchayan also came to know Viji's interest to cook Crab roast curry as her signature dish for her own Youtube channel.

During the last six days of the physical meeting in Viji's kitchen Sanchayan during the process of multiple conversation came to know about Viji's fascination for the colour pink and how she has transformed her room into a pink room. Viji also shared how the aroma of her cooking is appreciated by her neighbours and often she shares food that she cooks for her family with her neighbours. During the course of these conversations Sanchayan proposed the idea of hosting a Crab Curry party and Viji readily agreed to work towards sharing the process to a larger group of friends. This led to the installation of the Pink room by transforming her pink colored drawing room into a LED lit space. Viji's interest in listening to Malayalam film songs and the whole aspiration to be present in public domain led to a scenographic dialogue together with the help of Viji's daughter and son. Viji's husband R Ramesh also took an active role in assisting her in cooking food for twenty people.

The film is a result of a spontaneous following of Viji's process of cooking and also a conscious choreographed film shooting where Viji performed in front of the camera sharing her life, her tools and statements. In her own words, "I love to cook...I love to serve food...but I am not a servant". This film is an extension of the multilayered conversation between Viji Ramesh and Sanchayan Ghosh and reflect the aspiration of Viji Ramesh to move beyond her role of a homemaker to an independent individual.

Moutushi Chakraborty

(Kolkata, India)

Sugar / Pañcasara

Duration: 5:12 mins

Collaborator:

Manju Salih

Other than being a source of nourishment, Food also has deeper connotations that form the cultural identity of inherited knowledges, towards sustenance and wellbeing. It holds within it, memories of flavour and fragrance that connects us across generations, which is why rituals across the world positions food as a symbolic presence. As in birth - so in death, food becomes a medium which connects one to ancestral lineages, a continuity in the

greater celebration of life. The Woman, who toils in the Kitchen, to provide this comfort across generations, though remains a silent and unacknowledged presence. She is like Sugar - her presence enriches lives, and her absence makes it bland, as she herself remains obscure. In recognition of these silent presences like Manju Salih, the Homemaker I came to know in Kochi, a Sugar Tongue (sculpture made of sugar and food color) was created in her kitchen. As the sugar form dissolved into water again, the mortal impermanence of life is evoked. In this transient play of birth, toil and death - all for food and comfort, miniscule appreciations are all that matters perhaps. Drawing Manju's palms on her Kitchen wall, where she toils day and night, was my way of recognising and memorializing this labour of love.





Lekha Narayanan (Kochi, India) The Jasmine in the Garden

Duration: 6:46 mins

Collaborators:

Seena Shaheer, Sana Shihab, Rinsi Shifas and Safna Shihad

My collaborator in this art project is Seena Shaheer. She lives in Mattancheri with her husband, a construction worker, three sons and their families in a rented house which has rooms just enough for them. Shihab and Shihad work cutting fish and Shifas is a house painter. Sana is married to the eldest son Shihab, and they have two children Zaman and Syha. Rinsi is married to the second son Shifas and have two children Shenza and Samra. The youngest son Shihad married Safna and their child is called Zakia.

The kitchen in this home has four women in it. This film is about how Seena has created a space within this house where the three young co-sisters share the work and support each other. The kitchen in the presence of these women seems a very positive space. While working, they move around with an easy friendship, one bringing out a vessel, the other cutting the fruit, while a third rinses and wipes the vessel to keep the cooked food. They observe what one may need and are quick to provide it to hand. The kitchen, the children and the house with all its work is maybe easier and manageable because of their togetherness. So even if one feels unwell or goes to meet her family, the others will step in and make the meals, take care of the child/children etc. Usually, they work together. If one cleans upstairs, the others manage downstairs. While they go out as single families; they also go out together, mother-in-law and daughters-

in-law with children on small outings to the seafront or park.

These women do not expect the sharing of work from the men in their lives but from each other. Women who are also in the same situation as themselves. And this being in one house also provides the necessary company, conversation and support which gives relief to the task of bringing up children and managing a house.

There is a hierarchy in managing the work. Usually cooking is done by Seena and Sana, the eldest daughter in law while Rinsi and Safna does the supporting work of cutting, grating, washing vessels etc. Individual desires are also not indulged in the home. Nothing is cooked for one or two persons. Whatever is cooked in the house is cooked for everyone. Seena also steps in where ever needed, in deciding what is to be cooked, lending a hand, keeping aside food for each one, watching the small children or settling small quarrels between children.

In this society at this point of time, work is valued only if it earns money. The work that the women do, the care, creativity and time they give to weave this home is not given enough value. It is invisible, routine, made up of small actions of care which continue throughout the day.

One of the activities I had done at the house was to sit together with Seena and the daughters in law to create patterns and textures. Mostly this was done with ready made stencils and vegetables cut outs. I also took their palm prints and palm outlines and later cut out each person's pattern in the shape of their hands. This was with the desire to give a value to their work, to the many chores that take up their day. The women put up the hand cut outs in the kitchen articulating the invisible and visible nature of their work.

Justin Ponmany (Mumbai, India)
**“And I will give you a new
heart, and a new spirit I will
put within you.”**

Duration: 8:51 mins

Collaborator:
Preea Mathai

The general premise of this curatorial project aims to be that of an exploration into the binary of the sexes and associated stereotypes. The work hopes to offer psychological insight into a homemaker's life harking back eight generations, who have plied the same kitchen in this particular instance.

I have drawn reference to two paintings by the Dutch artist, Johannes Vermeer, who depicted domestic scenes and interior life..... and bared some affinity to the Japanese director, Yasujiro Ozu. The trope of a left and right eye blinking alternation at the beginning paves the way for the rest of the video, giving away my general distrust of monocular lens readings, possibly encouraging a calibration to adjudicate a visual.

Blinking and blink rates pair with muteness and thoughts which flow alongside water and the flow of time, indistinguishable as to whether it is slow or rapid.

Tanya proposes to lean on to the idea of 'phenomenology', I gather. Diverse as the domain might seem, it is the aspect of knowledge assimilated by the 'lived experience' of human consciousness, which feeds off 'Umwelt', the environment; must be her starting point, I imagine.

The work is therefore an examination into 'situatedness', the notion that our own experiences (historically, culturally, familiarly and personally) dramatically shape the way we interpret and respond to the world around us, and it relies on epoché, i.e., the bracketing out of all preconceptions, assumptions and a priori ideas that might intervene with immediate perception; which may be construed to be in line with methodical doubt.

Preea's own life and thoughts, is imagined here as a continued embodiment of generations prior and beyond, and is an amalgamation of many voices thus in space and in time.







Muriel Moreau (Saou, France)

Diary of a Woman Tree

Etching, Wood, Wax

Inspired and fascinated by the textile tradition in India, this piece is a succession of strokes in the image of embroidery or weaving, typically feminine activities linked to life and destiny. With the same patience and preciousness as the women weavers, I enter into a similar, meditative creative process, thus revealing a palpable time and our presence in the world. Starting from the heart, I have shared my

intimacy, through the metaphorical figure of a tree stump, coated with beeswax used in the traditional manufacture of candles, an object that was once commonplace but also religious, its flame evoking the soul, light and knowledge. The presence of the wax connects us to our origins, our history and our beliefs. The red is there to convey a sense of life and strength.

Diary of a Woman Tree is a daily introspection of my thoughts, but also of the internal matter of the tree. I embody myself through the image of her trunk to describe daily the elusiveness of her feelings.



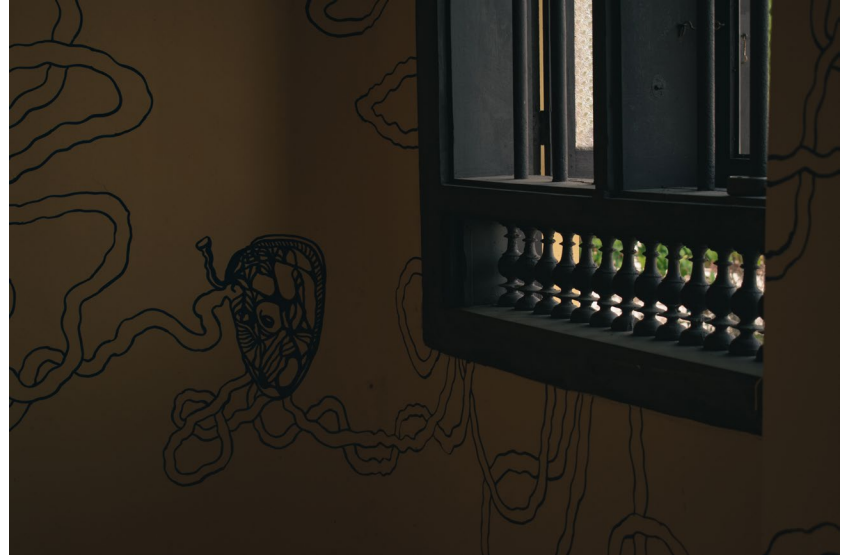


Vivek Vilasini (Bangalore, India)

**Between One Shore and Several Others,
"Thinking Man after Auguste Rodin"**

Archival Print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag, 2011
41 x 61.5 inches





Home away from Home, **Mario D'Souza**





CURATOR
Tanya Abraham

ASSISTANT CURATOR
Rhea Moras

DESIGN TEAM
Rhea Moras
Atul Bejoy
Leonal Sabu
Jeanne Elizabeth
Arya Menon
Gopika Kannan
Namita Maria Joseph
Madhura Dharmadhikari

CAMERA CREW
Atul Bejoy
Leonal Sabu

ARTIST ASSISTANTS
Rosmia Xavier
Anusha Vinog
Savio Joseph
Divyanjaly A
Ashwin AC
Arya Venu
Stephin TS

SPECIAL THANKS TO

Julie & Cecil Jose

Ajit R Menon
Saleeh S
Ashkar PM
Shifas TS
Anish Akbar
Rinshad Azeez
Jagadeesh Kumar
Sara Mamen
Divya Joseph

