



Recent Projects

New Grants

Filmmaker-photographer-painter KM Madhusudhanan, performer Jyoti Dogra, and filmmaker Vaibhav Abnavi are recipients of recent grants under our Extending Arts Practice programme, which supports artists whose projects emerge from reflections on the larger contexts of their practice.



Film, television and theatre actor, Jyoti Dogra created *The Doorway*, an exploration of real and imagined stories in the tradition of Grotowski's Theatre Laboratory. Jyoti's performance was a response to current theatre practice which, she says, is "either a coldly intellectual activity, at one extreme, or else a spectacle, at the other." By using gestures, mumbblings, sounds, and body images, she sought "to cultivate more intuitive acts of understanding [in theatre]."

The Doorway premiered in May at Gallerie Beyond in Mumbai. Read a review [here](#). She will perform at Adishakti, Pondicherry, and Ninasam, Heggodu in the coming months.

Kali Kalisu

The arts are usually relegated to a corner of the classroom, so to speak. *Kali-Kalisu* is a joint initiative between IFA and the Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan, Bangalore to bring the arts to the centre. The project consists of a series of 20 arts workshops for school teachers and teacher trainees across the state of Karnataka.

The workshops will encompass music, dance, puppetry, theatre, visual arts and the wide sweep of cultural knowledge. Teachers will take their new-found knowledge into their day-to-day classes, enriching the learning experience in many schools across the state. The workshops will be conducted by five major arts institutions from Karnataka: Ananya, Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts, Bharath Gyan Vigyan Samithi, Gombi Mane (Puppet House) and Ninasam.

Read an in-depth report on the workshop in [The Hindu](#). And scroll down to read an interview with educator Usha Rao who attended the first of the workshops in Heggodu, Karnataka.

Public Eye

Four IFA-funded Performances

Musician and balladeer Mangangsana Meitei is the first of our first New Performance grantees from the Northeast. His ballad *Phou-Oibi*, a contemporary interpretation of traditional Manipuri performing forms, which premiered in Imphal in late March, was very well-received. *Telegraph* wrote, "Those who watched *Phou-Oibi* will not forget it in a hurry". Read the full text of the review [here](#).



Giselle ki Kahani—a collaborative performance by Varun Narain and Rea Krishnatraye which combined puppetry and ballet—was performed in Delhi in April. Reporting on audience reactions to *Giselle*, the collaborators wrote, "Many people told us that they had never seen anything like this and were keen we repeat the performance as they wanted others they knew to be able to watch it."

The duo faced many infrastructural challenges in mounting *Giselle*, however, and noted that, "We need to pray for the emergence of an honest Indian theatre infrastructure that will respect contemporary Indian artists for their work—and not their ability or inability to 'make money'."

Read a report on *Giselle ki Kahani* in [Time Out](#)

Grantees in Mumbai

Five IFA grantees came together on the evening of April 20 at Jnanapravaha, Mumbai to talk about and showcase their work to an invited audience of about a hundred people. The presentations helped to publicise these projects and were also a platform to invite donations to IFA.

The grantees were Vasudha Thozhur (conducting art workshops with victims of the 2002 Gujarat riots), Amit Madheshiya and Shirley Abraham (documenting Maharashtra's touring tent cinemas), Sunil Shanbag (director of a play about the mill-workers of Mumbai and currently researching censorship in theatre), and Hardik Biswas (building an archive of photographs of urban middle-class women of Bengal between the 1880s and 1970s).

[Midday](#) profiled all five grantees and their projects.

Fundraiser

The Big Picture

"Many of us are patrons of the arts but this time it is artists themselves who have come forward to donate, in full or in part, the sales proceeds of their work for the arts." This is how IFA corpus donor and art collector, Abhishek Poddar, introduced *The Big Picture*—IFA's single biggest fundraiser to date.

67 well-known as well as upcoming artists contributed artwork towards a 10-day exhibition in Bangalore which was inaugurated by leading Indian artist Atul Dodiya, who donated one of his own works to the show. Another highlight was renowned artist and ex-IFA trustee Gulammohammed Sheikh's contribution to the show in the form of a large digital collage called *Speaking Tree*.

We are proud to have pulled off a show of this scale. It is also significant that it was an IFA donor who, recognising the potential of art supporting art, conceptualised this exhibition despite these financially uncertain times. IFA thanks Sobha Developers, ITC Welcome Group of Hotels, Sumukha Gallery, Abstract Gallery and the Seagull Foundation for the Arts for their support.

Announcements

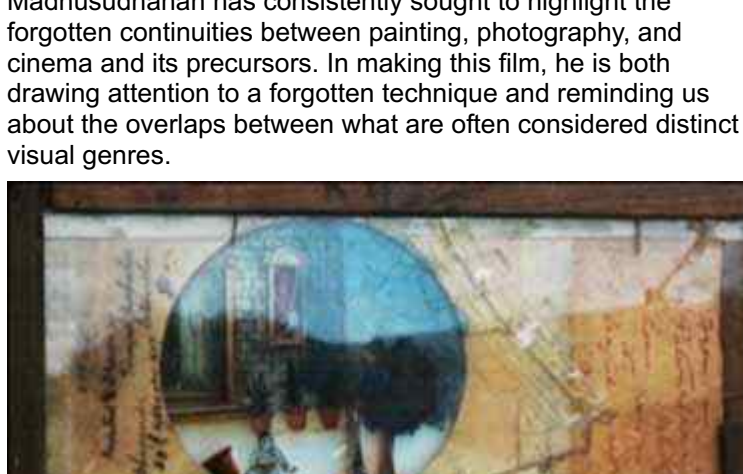
Arts Research and Documentation Grants

IFA is inviting proposals for its Arts Research and Documentation Programme under the categories:

1. Research that critically investigates the construction of artistic traditions;
and/or
2. Research into contemporary artistic practices.

[Download](#) the Request for Proposals in English and other languages. Application deadline August 15, 2009.

KM Madhusudhanan is making a 16mm fictional film on the Indian magic lantern or *Shambharik Kharolika*, a late 19th century innovation involving the use of painted images on glass to create cinema projections. Through his work, Madhusudhanan has consistently sought to highlight the forgotten continuities between painting, photography, and cinema and its precursors. In making this film, he is both drawing attention to a forgotten technique and reminding us about the overlaps between what are often considered distinct visual genres.



Meanwhile, filmmaker Vaibhav Abnavi is exploring the history of experimentation in Marathi theatre with special reference to playwright Mahesh Elkunchwar. He is interested in how experimentation itself can create orthodoxies and how Elkunchwar consistently challenged these. Vaibhav's film will itself challenge the 'real' by merging enacted scenes from Elkunchwar's plays with depictions of the playwright's inner life.

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Meanwhile, Jamini Pathak's staging of Kuo Pao Kun's play for children, *Day I Met the Prince* (based on Antoine Saint Exupery's *The Little Prince*) premiered at Prithvi Theatre's SummerTime for Kids Festival. "Interestingly, the play had 11 shows in just five days, and each of them was houseful. So the response has been undoubtedly extraordinary," says Pathak. Read a review in [The Asian Age](#).

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Beautiful Thing 1, a new performance by dancer-choreographer Padmini Chettur, seeks to bridge the gaps between our classical memories and our contemporary selves.

The performance, which features text by Vivek Narayanan, music by Maarten Visser, and scenography by Sumant Jayakrishnan, premiered at Adishakti, Pondicherry on June 4.

Beautiful Thing 1 is now touring Europe. Check the schedule [here](#).

Usha Rao reports on *Kali Kalisu*—a unique initiative jointly developed by IFA and the Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan, Bangalore to offer arts workshops to school teachers and teacher trainees across the state of Karnataka. 35 drama teachers came together at Ninasam in Heggodu, Shimoga District in May to participate in the first of the 20 Kali Kalisu workshops and take their learning back to the classroom.

What is the role of the arts in a government school in Karnataka?

I think the question should apply to all schools whether they are government or private schools because I think arts education is neglected across the board.

I am not an expert in arts education—I speak as someone who has been engaged with education, with the arts and with arts education.

Ideally the arts ought to be integrated into the classroom. If not they will continue to have the 'extracurricular' tag and will continue to occupy a subordinate rung in the life of a child. Currently education centres mainly on memory-based learning that is all about information and not exploration and experience. The experts will tell you that so-called 'learning' is more than this. Perhaps this is a window that can be opened by the arts. The arts take you into the realm of the senses. They give you the tools and the space to explore your immediate world, your relationship to it and also let you express it in a way that is your own. This is crucial for all of us and, of course, essential for children. After all, the passage through childhood is one of discovery of the world and the self and the formation of impressions about the same.

But I don't think arts education is going to serve any purpose if it is 'taught' in the way most subjects are taught in schools with the teacher demanding that the child pick up x number of skills and be able to reproduce the 'answer' in the expected way. Whether it is visual art or theatre, this approach will only produce parrots and children who will grow up to hate painting because they cannot draw a sunset 'correctly' (which is what happens often in schools). If approached as a democratic process of learning through exploration through the senses, it can in fact offer ways of teaching other subjects as well. For example, in an art class if you put observation of the tree in the school yard at the centre, you offer the child a chance to look, listen, touch and feel and express how he/she 'sees' various aspects of the tree. They can move into experiencing the tree rather than be forced to reproduce a 'perfect' image of it. The variety of lines, forms, colours, and textures will go way beyond any unitary form of 'a tree' that a teacher might have to offer.

How did teachers respond to the workshops? Were they excited? Were there any resistances, questions or doubts?

The teachers were extremely excited about being there. Since most of them are 'freshers', they were really thirsty for inputs that could go into the classroom. They asked questions, took copious notes, discussed, critiqued sessions and were completely involved in learning, sifting and absorbing all they could in the 15 days.

The only apprehensions they had was related to their work places—they were unclear about the syllabus and its interpretation. Some of them had faced resistance from school authorities regarding the relevance of drama in schools. Others were asked to substitute as subject teachers! But in the course of the workshop they did get the opportunity to share these apprehensions with each other and to explore possible strategies to tackle them.

A frequent response to my questions about relevance of this workshop was: "It should be done for all teachers." About the movement module one participant said, "It has allowed me to explore the finer aspects of movement."

The workshops offered a rich range. There was poetry-writing, movement art, theatre games, puppetry and Carnatic music, among other things. Apart from exposure to these forms, the idea was also to open teachers out to the generally expressive and creative potential of education. Do you think the teachers returned with both these things—a new set of skills and a fresh attitude?

These participants are not 'typical' of most teachers as they have had some exposure to all the above forms as students at Ninasam. However, they did get to dip a little more intensely into some of these areas—for example movement, puppetry and the possibility of using the visual medium by drawing on locally available material (as suggested by Bharath Gyan Vigyan Samithi). What it did give them was the possibility of weaving together various forms of the arts into their theatre work as drama teachers. It also suggested to them a range of methodologies that they could experiment with. For example, many facilitators used participative methodologies that drew on the experience of participants as a springboard to introduce a skill or an idea. They also demonstrated the importance of debriefing after an activity in order to highlight the learning from it. Some participants found the exposure to these methods of teaching new and valuable. In some areas they probably took away a range of experiences that they could draw from rather than replicate them in the classroom. In a module like puppetry for example, the emphasis was more on polishing a skill (puppet-making). They felt this module offered a skill that could be passed on to their students.

What has been the one main learning from the Heggodu workshop as we go forward with the workshop series over the coming months?

It is hard to draw a generalisation from this workshop simply because these teachers are exceptionally sensitive to the arts given their stint at Ninasam.

The workshop did signal that there is an intense need for possibilities with teachers in the area of the arts because there isn't enough of it. Only when teachers are exposed to the engagement that the arts offers in terms of making learning an exciting and fulfilling experience can they be coaxed into bringing it into the classroom. That is the central and obvious learning that this workshop offered us.

All of them were unanimous in suggesting that these workshops were 'a must' for all teachers, regardless of what subject they taught.

From some of the concluding comments and observations that participants made it also became clear that teachers not only take back the skills and ideas but also methodologies and approaches that their facilitators have used in the workshop. Many of them seemed to have developed a sense of 'what would work' (and what doesn't work) as classroom processes. The sheer joy of being at the receiving end of a respectful, democratic and enjoyable 'classroom' interaction did leave its mark on them as teachers. And of course, some of them also learnt what not to do! What this workshop has done is circumscribed an area of possibilities as far as teacher enrichment/learning is concerned. What gets taken back is really an outcome of the particular teacher's expectations, experience and his/her understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

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