



India Foundation for the Arts

Quarterly Newsletter, July-September 2009
No.13

Recent Projects

New Grants

Bangalore's Sanket Trust recently received an IFA grant to organise a one-day "Teacher Training Initiative (TTI)" and a one-day symposium on "Theatre Pedagogy for Children" (August 31 and September 4). Both were intended to spark a long term engagement of teachers with education through theatre.

Ranga Shankara, the theatre initiative of the Sanket Trust, has a broad-based Theatre for Children programme called AHA! and these two one-day activities formed part of Ranga Shankara's first ever theatre festival exclusively for children.



Kirtana Kumar, Director of the Ancillaries Programme at the theatre festival, says, 'We decided that rather than organise a one-off skills-based theatre workshop, we would instead initiate a process of sharing, learning and re-thinking approaches to education. TTI was intended to recreate a network of teachers and theatre practitioners.' As regards the symposium, she remarks that, 'It is with some effort that pedagogical styles could be gleaned from the seven presentations [...] I suspect that this might have to do with there not being a defined, single contemporary Indian Theatre Pedagogy to begin with. Most people have fallen into the field by way of interest, passion, intuition, some shared techniques etc.' The learning from this too was that networking and sharing approaches was the need of the hour.

Arts Education Conference

Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore and IFA are organising *Arts Education: Contexts, Concepts, and Practices in Schools*, a large Arts Education Conference, on December 11 & 12, 2009 in Bangalore.

IFA's recent work in the area of Arts Education has been intensively focused on the empowerment of the school teacher through arts pedagogy training workshops. In particular, with support from Goethe-Institut, a far-reaching initiative called 'Kali-Kalisu' has brought Arts Education workshops to over 500 teachers in rural and small-town Karnataka. Read [more](#) about Kali-Kalisu and watch a video [here](#).

As an extension of 'Kali-Kalisu', this conference will perhaps be the first of its kind in the country. We invite you to block your dates and contact us if you are interested in participating. We are looking to involve a broad range of stakeholders, including policy makers, educationists, administrators, parents and students in the deliberations.

Please contact Carol Shatananda-Richard (carol@indiaifa.org) for more information.

Jail Museum in Bangalore



Bangalore Central Jail Seal

The new Freedom Park, created at the site of Bangalore's old Central Jail, is to include a Jail Museum which will offer a journey into the history of the old jail, and contrast this with more current representations of prison life in Karnataka State Prisons today.

IFA recently received a seed grant from the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike of the Government of Karnataka to conduct preliminary research on key prisons in Karnataka, towards developing plan on how to convert the main building of the old Bangalore Central Jail/Freedom Park into a state-of-the-art jail museum.

The proposed Jail Museum has the potential of becoming an icon of humanity and freedom. IFA is keen to take on the challenge of being involved in its creation.

Bar1's India-India Residency Returns

Writer-artist Biswamit Dwibedy, artist-filmmaker Aarthi Parthasarathy, and visual artists Mithila R Baidur and Himanshu S were the four artists selected from over a hundred to be part of Bengaluru Artist Residency 1 or bar1's IFA-funded India-India Residency. The four artists were based at the bar1 studio apartment in Vivekananda Nagar, Bangalore, from July to September 2009. This is the second edition of the residency, the first having taken place between July and September 2008.

Bar1 members feel that the high number of applications indicates the crucial need for exchange programmes for Indian artists within India. The open-ended, interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of the residency could also be a factor. According to a bar1 press release, "Our concept stressed the interdisciplinary interactions of the guests among themselves, with Bengaluru and with its arts scene, rather than the production of individual work."

The four artists held their first salon/open studio on August 1 at the bar1 studio apartment. The final exhibition of work made during the residency opened on September 19 and was on view till September 24 at the premises of Samuha, a new Bangalore-based artists' collective. Visit www.bar1.org for more.



Censorship and theatre

'A modern seduction of ideas exploring one of the most controversial issues of our time – morality and censorship.' The Sunil Shanbag-directed *S*x, M*orality and Cens*rship* premiered in Mumbai on September 28. The play is an outcome of Shanbag's exploration – funded by two IFA grants – of the history of censorship and theatre in Maharashtra.

The play goes back to the early 1970s when Vijay Tendulkar's classic, *Sakharam Binder*, set off a storm of controversy in the theatre scene.

Read what the blogs are saying [here](#) and [here](#).

The Other Song wins major award

Saba Dewan's *The Other Song*, an IFA-funded film on the culture of the tawaifs of Benaras, has been awarded the Macenet prize for the best international documentary at the Pusan International Film Festival 2009, one of Asia's leading film festivals.

According to the jury, Dewan's is a film "...whose ambition is no less but to create a lively monument to a culture soon to disappear forever. Far from being nostalgic, the film raises most relevant and burning questions to a society striving to erase its multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious past."

Documentary on Ladakhi film industry

'Ladakh attracts people like nobody's business, it drew us in and we kept wondering, what are we looking for?... And then, we started seeing these posters in the Leh market, and [heard] about Ladakhi films, shot on video, released in the local cinema hall.... And we were hooked.'

Samreen Farooqui and Shabani Hassanwalia have just released the IFA-funded *Out of Thin Air*, a story of Ladakh's subterranean local film movement. Taxi drivers, grocery store owners, cops and monks are producers, directors, camerapersons and actors in one of the youngest, and most dynamic, local film industries in the world.

Read reviews in [Open Magazine](#), [Indian Express](#) and Bangladesh's [Daily Star](#)

Award for IFA-supported Artists

Shreyas Karle, who was on a bar1 residency last year, has won the Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art's Emerging Artist Award 2009 along with Hemali Bhuta.

According to the jury, 'His works are loaded with visual pun, often developed with reference to mundane objects or situations. Absurdity becomes a metaphor which he uses to reflect upon social situations, thus creating an ambience of humour that mocks the ironies of reality. Interactivity is an integral part of his meaning making process, especially with reference to his community/collaborative projects.'

Katha Collage and Ismat Apa ke Naam-II

Naseeruddin Shah's Motley theatre group proved its popularity with Bangalore audiences yet again with the well-known *Katha Collage* – featuring three short plays based on stories by Premchand and Kamtanath – and *Ismat Apa Ke Naam-II*, a new set of plays taking off from Ismat Chughtai's stories.

The two IFA fundraisers ran to full houses on October 2 and 3. Our sponsors and partners were Prestige Group, The Park, Café Coffee Day and www.indianstage.com.

Brief Candle

September 6 saw the Sahitya Akademi Award-winning playwright Mahesh Dattani's *Brief Candle*, produced and directed by Lillete Dubey, performed in Bangalore's Chowdiah Hall.

Brief Candle emphasises the importance of the quality of our lives rather than how long we live.

Our sponsors and partners were Puravankara, HSBC, Chancery Pavilion, Kingfisher Airlines, Café Coffee Day, www.indianstage.in and www.indiaplaza.in.

Slant, Stance

IFA has made almost 250 grants since 1996. Most of these have gone to individuals and institutions located within the metropolitan, English-speaking context, simply because we are ourselves located in this context and most of our applications come from within it.

In 2006 we keenly felt the need to start an initiative that would exclusively fund work being done in languages other than English. We started with Bengali.

IFA Programme Executive Anuja Ghosalkar, who handles the Bengali Language Initiative, tells us more about what it has achieved in the last three years and our recent investigations into whether a similar initiative could be launched in the Marathi language.

Can you elaborate a little on the motivations behind IFA's Bengali Language Initiative?

Both IFA and those whose advice we sought strongly felt that there should be a funding programme which supports archiving practices as well as writing and research in languages other than English. In 2006, we felt we were ready – both in terms of financial resources and the expertise of our staff – to launch such an initiative. We started with Bengali.

It is important to note that we have, ever since we started making grants, funded work in multiple Indian languages. This has happened spontaneously, however, and not as the result of a concerted effort.

We believed that only a focused language initiative would redress the metropolitan, English bias in our grant making. Institutions and individuals in small towns would get pulled into the larger network of arts-centred practices and discussions. At the same time, individuals and institutions working in metropolitan cities, but in spaces where English is not the primary mode of engagement, would also benefit.

What kind of work has so far been funded under the Bengali Language Initiative'?

Starting from 2006, we have made a total of 10 grants under this initiative.

Digitising little magazines, creating a sound and oral history archive on the fakirs, and documenting photographs of urban middle-class women are some projects that have a stronger archival slant, while the production of an encyclopaedia on Bengali theatre, a book on the history of cartoons in Bengal, and a series of essays that explores the relationship between the language of contemporary Bengali poetry and the emergence of a new, urban middle class are some of the more 'writing' oriented projects.

In many cases, the research, writing and archiving aspects of these projects are interconnected, and are expected to yield both published outcomes as well as public archives.

The Initiative had multiple aims such as strengthening archives/libraries with a focus on sources in Bengali; generating documentation of cultural practices in West Bengal; and energising Bengali publication initiatives to disseminate research and documentation. Which of these aims have been best addressed over the last three years?

The focus has been on supporting collectors to digitise their material and ensure that it is done as per archival standards and that the collection is open to public access. In many cases we have supported an archive itself to either collect new materials or to digitise existing collections. Publication and dissemination will be the second stage of many of the grants we have made. In fact, the outcome of many of the research grants we made in last couple of years will either be encyclopaedias, monographs or scholarly books. So primarily the aim to strengthen archives/libraries has been best addressed in the last three years but with a larger sense of how these projects will further aid research and writing in the Bengali language.

What have been the major challenges and obstacles in implementing this Initiative?

A major challenge to do with this initiative has been that many grantees have needed a high degree of hand-holding because of their unfamiliarity with professional research methodologies. We have also, at times, had to persuade individuals collecting materials like posters, brochures, photographs and catalogues in the course of their projects to digitise and share them with a larger public.

Since several grantees aim to or will be encouraged to create digital archives, IFA organised a day-long workshop on digital archiving for all grantees on March 7 this year. This was in collaboration with the Media Lab of the Department of Film Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. Subjects covered included the role of digital archives, how to create digital archives, ethics involved in the use of these archives, and the relationship between collectors and archivists.

What does the future of the initiative look like and how will we apply our learning from the Bengali language context to other languages?

The response to the Initiative has been highly enthusiastic. Amateur researchers, academic researchers and practitioners have been funded, and we have organised meetings to enable grantees to share their learning with each other.

We recently appointed an advisory panel to provide guidance to grantees, evaluate projects and recommend future directions for this initiative. The panel emphasised the importance of making research findings and materials accessible in the public domain, especially through publication and archiving.

As regards the future of the initiative, the panel felt that research in and about rural and semi-urban areas of West Bengal ought to be supported. It also identified areas in which writing and research needs to be encouraged, such as travelogues, emerging cultures of communication, and handicrafts.

Along with reviewing the Bengali language initiative we have had preliminary meetings in Maharashtra to explore a similar language initiative there. These informal discussions were focused around gaps in the field of research, writing and translations that IFA could address if we were to start a language initiative in Marathi. Funding the translation of writings on pedagogy, critical and theoretical texts, and books on arts and aesthetics; supporting the creation of encyclopedias; and subsidising publishing were, as per the suggestions made, some of the possible areas in which IFA could intervene. We will also explore languages like Hindi and Kannada.

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