

# FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

## REVISITING ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS IN THE 21ST CENTURY INDIA

India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) in association with Emami Art presents

### Facing History and Ourselves\*

*Revisiting Archives and Museums in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century India*

Friday, December 02 & Saturday, December 03, 2022

Emami Art, Kolkata

Since the time they were established by the British in the 19th century, archives and museums in India have undergone a steady evolution. From serving to create a primitive and exotic image of India for the Raj to adapting to the sociopolitical and cultural aspirations of an emerging nation-state since 1947, these institutions have remained at the centre of debates on history, identity and culture. With time, they have become richer, numerous and, lately, glamorous sites of cultural activity and tourism. However, their symbolic value as *keepers of the past* continues to be somewhat static and accessible in a limited fashion. Today archives and museums operate within politically structured limits representing a myopic view of the past as a cultural and historical monolith. In the process, the fact that our societies are composed of diverse cultural impulses is undermined.

We are currently at a crucial juncture in history, marked by political tumult and social upheavals that raise questions about the roles of public institutions in general and archives and museums in particular. Some of these questions include: should archives and museums remain unaffected by the shifts in social and political climates? Should they stick to their primary mandate of documenting and preserving the past or facilitate creative endeavours that respond to the present and future? Can creative engagements with archives and museums bring forth lived histories and create space for a plurality of perspectives? How can they enable resistant forms of thinking, seeing, listening and feeling? And finally, how does all this work become accessible to the larger public?

The Archives and Museums programme at India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) is conceived as a response to these questions. It seeks to transform the sites of archives and museums into platforms for dialogue and discourse through creative and scholarly interventions to generate fresh critical perspectives.

This conference, presented by IFA in association with Emami Art, brings together creative practitioners, artists, curators, scholars, researchers, archivists and museum professionals to facilitate conversations about the fundamental role of archives and museums in our socially and politically fraught times.

Organised around keynote address and panels structured around the above questions moderated by field experts, the conference brings together 11 projects from five host institutions and Project Coordinators to articulate their experiences and challenges in reimagining archives and museums as sites of contact and departure for creating fresh narratives for a larger public.

Register [here](#) to attend the conference.

*\*The title of the Conference is partly taken from the Foundation Project of the same name with Subasri Krishnan, implemented by IFA under the Archives and Museum programme in collaboration with People's Archive of Rural India (PARI).*

***The conference is free and open to all and will have Indian Sign Language interpretation.***

*For all conference related queries and information, please write to [contactus@indiaifa.org](mailto:contactus@indiaifa.org)*

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