



## **Voices from the Field**

*Funding Scenarios for the Visual Arts in India*

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## Introduction

In the period since IFA's establishment in 1993, new players have entered the funding field alongside the departure of older ones. Concurrent with market liberalisation, changes in the conditions of making, selling, collecting and showing visual art have been unrelenting — international sales of Indian artists have skyrocketed, a raft of new galleries and museums have opened their doors and the initiation of India Art Fair in 2008 and Kochi Biennale in 2012, both firsts of their kind, marked a new phase in the maturation of a growing arts scene.

This fact-finding exercise has the twofold objective of: seeking to identify the organisations forming the backbone of funding and support for the visual arts in India, offering an analytical viewpoint on the terms of their engagement with the artist community; and, ascertaining existing needs of contemporary visual artists in this country and the infrastructural contexts in which they are situated. With this aim in view we have focused on the period between 2010 and 2013, asking if there have been any significant changes in the funding landscape, particularly in terms of who is funding what and how. Equally, we are interested in determining why certain practitioners and organisations have succeeded in getting a slice of the funding pie where others have failed or succeeded to lesser degrees. Institutional ideologies and mission goals, which by necessity are inherent in each and every organisation, have a role to play in how these entities view and interact with the field. A greater understanding of what these encompass will enhance our ability to situate ourselves in relation to the agents responsible for the shifts that periodically occur in the funding ecosystem.

By speaking to key, strategically located individuals and organisations in three of India's major metropolises — Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore — we have gained glimpses into the broader picture of cross-country challenges and concerns for both those seeking and dispensing funding. In finding answers to a range of questions, whose breadth go beyond our capacities to solve single-handedly, we have wanted nonetheless to bring the Extending Arts Practice (EAP) programme — through which we support artists who undertake to bring a new set of questions coupled with critical reflection to their work — into contact with the currents pulling funding organisations in retrogressive and progressive motions. The EAP programme is entering a review process this year that forms part of IFA's effort at ensuring the programme remains consistent in its ability to map on to the blind spots in funding for visual art practice that is breaking new ground. We are confident that this will reenergise and, if necessary, refocus our efforts to support the development of experimental new work in contemporary art that is bold enough to go beyond and/or build upon conventional forms and methods.

We have chosen to break this document into a number of key areas reflecting the most urgent questions that we have been asking through the course of research with respect to the role currently played by funding and cultural organisations in the visual arts sector. Analysis will filter out of the data collected, a critical understanding of the (i) common concerns (ii) divergences and (iii) key challenges, marking how funding bodies and support agencies operate. There are important distinctions between these analytical categories; while common concerns identify what are widely perceived as being the key issues affecting the vitality of the arts scene, divergences bring together the exceptions to the rule, and key challenges mark out those areas which IFA might want to consider as part of its review process. Key findings of this study are drawn out and integrated into a conclusion that brings us up to date with what is being done and, equally, what is to be done in supporting the continued development of a vibrant contemporary visual arts sector.

## **Rationale & Objectives**

### *Rationale*

- The need to develop a growth strategy for the EAP programme, ensuring that it is evolving in a healthy dialogue with the current realities of contemporary visual art practice
- Conversations with cultural institutions, early, mid and late-career artists, curators, gallerists and museum personnel are vital to expanding and updating our field knowledge in contemporary visual arts practice
- A desire to address a knowledge deficit in connection with the activities, approaches and constituencies with which other funders are working
- The consolidation of external viewpoints into a pool of knowledge enriches the IFA's understanding of the extent to which funds generated through its corpus and fundraising efforts are being mobilised with the maximum benefit for the visual arts community

### *Objectives*

The objectives of this study are tied to a number of key research questions growing out of our commitment as a funding agency to staying in touch with the needs of the artistic community whom we serve. These questions may be broadly summarised as follows:

- How are existing India-wide funding and support mechanisms succeeding and falling short in meeting the needs of visual artists?
- Where are the contemporary visual arts and artists most vulnerable?
- What are the divergences and/or overlaps between the funding expectations of visual artists and the approach of funding bodies and other cultural agencies in allocating funds or other support in kind?

By arriving at a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by visual artists committed to experimentation and pushing the boundaries of their chosen form, we will be better equipped to bring the EAP programme into their ambit, and engage with artists from an informed position. It is hoped that in providing a set of responses to the identified research questions, we will continue to meet an objective, which is worth reiterating, of connecting the EAP programme with those artists who are most deserving of support not because they fall into line with any preconceived, set notions of artistic excellence but for their willingness to take worthwhile risks that progress their individual practices and make a contribution to the wider visual arts field.

## **Methodology**

Audio recorded interviews of key organisations and experts — encompassing artists, curators, museum directors, cultural agency staff and funding bodies among others based in Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai — operating in the visual arts sector constitute the key sources for data collection. Interviews were conducted one-on-one where possible and by telephone in circumstances which did not offer an alternative. Through data analysis of this extensive set of conversations with organisations and experts (see annexure-i for questionnaires structuring interviews with respondents), we will attempt to pinpoint expectations of funding and other arts and culture support bodies in addition to how these agencies view themselves, in terms of their approach to and methods of funding the visual arts together with their metrics of success. Interviewees, distributed across Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata and Mumbai, are as follows:

## **Delhi**

Anupam Poddar (Devi Art Foundation)  
Pooja Sood (KHOJ)  
Bhavna Kakkar (Latitude 28 and Take Magazine)  
Shuddhabrata Sengupta (Raqs Media Collective and Sarai)  
Vidya Sivadas (Vadhehra Art Gallery and FICA)  
Sabaf Raza (Pro Helvetia)  
Tanima Maniktala (Pro Helvetia)  
Robin Malick (Goethe Institute, Delhi)

## **Mumbai**

Diana Campbell (Creative India)  
Sree Goswami (Project 88)  
Abhay Sardesai (Art India)  
Shilpa Gupta (Visual Artist)  
Abhishek Hazra (Visual Artist)  
Marla Stukenberg (Goethe Institut, Max Muller Bhavan, Mumbai)

## **Bangalore**

Suresh Jayaram (1 Shanthi Road)  
Annapurna Garimela (Jackfruit)  
Sindhura Jois (Visual Artist and Jackfruit)  
Sheela Gowda (Visual Artist)  
Christoph Storz (Visual Artist)  
Raghu Wodeyar (Visual Artist)

## **Kolkata**

Adip Dutta (Visual Artist)  
Nobina Gupta (Visual Artist)  
Durba Nanda (Visual Artist)

The following organisations were approached but were unable to commit the time for interview preparation and participation: Jean-Philippe Bottin (Alliance Francaise, Delhi); Rob Lynes and Charlie Walker (British Council, Delhi); Shireen Gandhi (Chemould Prescott, Mumbai); Abhay Maskara (Gallery Maskara; Mumbai); Mortimer Chatterjee (Chatterjee & Lal, Mumbai); Jitish Kallat (Visual Artist, Mumbai); Tejal Shah (Visual Artist, Mumbai); Deepika Sorabjee (Visual Artist, Mumbai); Shilpa Phadke (Prof. Chairperson TISS, Mumabi); Anuradha Parikh (Mohile Parikh Centre, Mumbai); Anne Dubourg (Alliance Francaise, Mumbai); Lata Mani (Peeking Duck Collective)

## **Common Concerns**

### *(i) The art of the 'present'*

Accounts are plentiful of how the excessive popularity of new media art with funders and in the market is sidelining painting and sculpture at the level of production bursaries and visibility at exhibitions. A tendency funding bodies are seen to share is that of being narrow in the focus of

what they support, which in turn becomes a breeding ground for these biases to reproduce themselves. Storz says as much in his observation that ‘There has always been an ideal view on the part of the funding agencies of what the proper art of the present is, and I remember the time that this was sculpture and painting, I see people are making the same mistakes as they did then today in favouring new media, a bad new media piece is looked at being better than a good traditional painting and that is the same problem that I remember 20/30 years back with painting and sculpture.’ Shilpa Gupta too cautions against being co-opted into supporting what is in vogue, ‘Fundors want to give money to what looks new, something that is cool. Anything that is considered cool and new becomes popular very quickly. Let the art grow and evolve first and then get into funding and supporting it. The new needs to make its own journey’. Without taking seriously questions of rigour and the artistic intent of ‘the new’, conditions are created for mediocre art, dressed up as groundbreaking, to monopolise the little funding that is available.

*(ii) A capricious art market*

A viewpoint that is widely shared by key stakeholders — Pooja Sood, Shuddhabrata Sengupta and Vidya Shivadas among others — posits that in a recessionary period when the art market has been shrinking at an unprecedented rate, the grossly underdeveloped nature of infrastructures supporting contemporary art and practice have come into full view. There is consensus that without increased government spending of tax-payer money and encouraging of a transparent culture of corporate and philanthropic contributions, contemporary art practices will continue to be an unviable pursuit for the vast majority of visual artists. Vidya Shivadas paints a decidedly bleak picture: ‘There is a market that isn’t supporting a lot of practice anymore, there is a crisis in the art world ... It doesn’t seem to be very viable, you have a few sources like the Max Mueller and Pro Helvetia but apart from that it’s quite difficult.’ Pooja Sood meanwhile pinpoints the anomaly of the IFA as a cause for concern: ‘Very little money is available for individual artists, it’s probably the IFA and a number of patrons, also the galleries give a little money’. The lack of home grown institutions and overdependence on foreign markets negatively impacts the local scene in the tendency for example of moulding practice to be, as Garimella notes, ‘portable for an elsewhere.’

*(iii) The icing without the cake*

The fact that FICA receives an average of 500 applications for their Emerging Artist award is indicative of the esteem and importance with which awards and prizes are regarded by visual artists at the beginning of their careers. Furthermore, their prevalence and high visibility encourages onlookers to misdiagnose the health of the Indian arts scene by building a verdict on the basis of what is cosmetic in appearance. The drum rolls, surprises and suspense of awards ceremonies and the media fanfare accompanying them have the effect of plastering over the structural gaps of the sector. Sengupta sees such awards as a cause of concern not celebration: ‘The thing is that these (SKODA, FICA emerging artist award) would be good if they were sitting on top of other things, if there was a regular process, a rolling process, a regularity, a funding cycle with regularity, not a prize, more like an arts council that drives a regular cycle of thinking and production, its not singling people out for special merits, awards only make sense when you’re doing other things, but if the only support that is available is in the form of an award then it skews things.’ In like manner, if awards are about achieving and displaying a narrow definition of excellence, the freedom to make mistakes will not exist. This has implications for the growth of a contemporary arts scene whose future is dependent on artists who experiment. As pointed out by Pooja Sood, ‘Unless artists are supported and given the facilities to experiment and push their practice, you’re going to have the same old stuff, its how you grow the scene.’

*(iv) Inefficiencies in public institutions: an understatement?*

The moribund state of government run art institutions, attributed to a lack of cultural management expertise among staff, is lamented by people working across the arts. Robin Mallick Director, Programmes South Asia, Goethe Institut, Delhi, makes his exasperation clear in stating: 'I'm afraid to say that the management of government run spaces is horrible. There must be an encouragement for the government to feel the pressure and improve the infrastructure, cultural management and expertise. Most employees don't have the professional background to do this work.' Sadly, inefficiencies in the deployment of existing resources make the contribution of the considerable network of government spaces and grants to the visual arts sector negligible in character.

*(v) Vulnerabilities of early-career artists*

Among the many urgencies for currently active funding and support agencies is that of recognising issues of livelihood and debating if there is there a way of identifying and supporting artists who are liable to drop out of the art world before they have reached their potential. While a financial means testing approach is not the solution in the case of grant giving, there is space for the nurturing of emerging young artists in becoming economically sustainable. The benefit of this will not solely be for the artist in question but for the wider arts scene, provided that the greater representation of artists from less privileged backgrounds becomes a reality.

*(vi) Aiding artist monopolies*

Monopolisation of funding by a clique of artists, a cause of serious concern, has been attributed to processes of selection which are inadequate to the task of ensuring artists who are not already part of a network are on a level playing field with well known names. This is a viewpoint shared by many, including Sabaf Raza at Pro Helvetia, who is otherwise less critical than other interviewees in their perceptions of the supports available for contemporary art practice: 'You do see similar names crop up, it's the same people you see, I'm sure its their work and sometimes they're just very good at it - at selling themselves.' Kakka gives a variation on this point of view, declaring that the devil is in the writing not the concept: 'There's a certain kind of person who can write that gets the IFA funding'.

*(vii) Economics of survival – early careers artists*

To become economically self sustaining, artists adopt strategies of survival that typically involves teaching and producing commercial artworks. In Durba Nanda's case, a visual artist who recently graduated with an MFA from Santiniketan, 'teaching young children and producing paintings for interior decoration purposes' constitute their primary income sources. However, opportunities to sell paintings and teach aren't sufficient in themselves to offset financial hardship. Durba spent between 3 and 4 years buying the time needed to do an MFA, and says that the impact on his practice during this period of saving was such that 'everything was under water'. To avoid extended ruptures of this sort and so as not to take himself out of his practice, his future plan is to 'paint something that is at once saleable and connected to a current project'. He admits that although this is not an ideal situation, alternatives are absent: 'its very hard to develop your practice while producing saleable works but there is no other way.' Nobina Gupta, a Calcutta based painter, by contrast, offers an alternative perspective since for her the by-products of income generating activities are of tremendous value to her art practice. She cites the example of how participating in cultural festivals allows her a space in which to enhance negotiating skills appropriate to collaborative and other work settings. Also, through doing

commissioned works, particularly in three dimensional formats, there is opportunity to widen her technical expertise beyond the range of what her own practice demands.

Those who succeed in getting a university teaching post enjoy far greater financial security than artists who rely on short term jobs such as teaching weekend art classes to children. Adip Dutta, who is not as he says ‘quote unquote a selling Indian artist’, is one such example: ‘I have a teaching job at a university that is aided by the West Bengal government and my salary comes in part from the UGC. I’ve been teaching for the last 11 years and that has really helped me and it’s still helping me.

Young artists inexperienced in negotiating and managing relationships with commercial galleries are prone to making decisions that might negatively impact on the development of their practice. Dutta spoke of how an ill-judged decision on his part resulted in being locked into an unhappy marriage with a New York based gallery: ‘I wasn’t aware of how galleries functioned – I went with Aikon gallery in New York but that was a mistake since I had already showed at Project 88. This was a mistake but I didn’t know at the time, there are issues of exclusivity and Project 88 were rightly upset. This also had a negative impact on my growth. With Aikon, I felt there was definite proscription which was not there with Project 88 or Experimenter. It has to be your practice if that is in some ways disrupted it becomes traumatic, so it was very bad.’

A strikingly low proportion of art school graduates develop an artistic practice post graduation. Dutta puts this figure at 2%: ‘I know of other artists, my juniors at the university, and I would say 2% of them are surviving or doing what they want to do. For one friend who is in his thirties, funds or scholarships are really helpful because he doesn’t make work that the galleries are interested in selling. He doesn’t have a job but he applies for these residencies and he almost lives from one residency to another and somehow he has been able to continue to produce work.’

## **Divergences**

### *(i) Cultural institutions: terms of engagement*

Cultural institutions that include the Goethe Institute and Pro Helvetia are distinctive in their engagement with the visual arts field in that a tangible connection with their respective national territories forms a prerequisite requirement for Indian artists seeking their support. The subsequent international collaborations between Indian and non-Indian artists, and the availability of travel funds supporting residencies in these locations and in India for international visiting artists, that are offshoots of this stipulation, make legible the priorities shaping the named organisations’ contributions to an arts scene here, in addition to the net gains and/or drawbacks which result.

### *(ii) The visual arts as well-funded?*

Only one respondent was of the opinion that the visual arts in India are sufficiently funded. Raza, a programme manager at ProHelvetia, states: ‘Sometimes it seems to us like it’s very well funded, maybe sometimes more than the performing arts for example’.

### *(iii) Rising anxiety levels*

There exists an anxiety about the inevitability of a moving away in attention of the international art world from India. For the early career artists, who have most to loose with changing currents moving across the body of the arts world, the importance of international recognition grows and decreases in proportion to the strength of the domestic economy for art in India. For Sengupta,

the retreat of international collectors and curators signals a crisis for contemporary Indian artists who have yet to make their breakthrough: ‘My generation of artists weren’t a product of the Indian arts system, but I don’t know if people from outside of the arts system will have as easy a time as us, where will they get their recognition and support?’ Since this is a time of transition, one shaped by the fallout of a worldwide recession, it remains to be seen if the worst fears of individuals such as Sengupta are fully actualised.

*(iv) For the common good*

Funding that is likely to have a ripple effect in benefiting the wider arts community is something that the IFA is seen, from one quarter at least, as not having grappled with. Furthermore, slavish adherence to wording of programmes is seen as putting this beyond the organisation’s reach. Sheela Gowda builds an argument that puts collective benefits dispersed across the arts community before the growth of an individual artist’s practice, suggesting that programmes such as that of EAP are not being sufficiently interventionist in this regard: ‘Grants which reach out from you to other people are far more useful. Giving it to someone who’s work or a programme through which ideas, action, material get distributed to many other people and therefore the arts community is something you need to look at more carefully and not sit on the wording.’

*(v) Is the backseat a good seat?*

Unlike Sengupta and Poddar who felt that the IFA has a leadership role to play in a future consortium dedicated to lobbying the government to pledge and act on a commitment to supporting contemporary arts practice, Suresh Jayaram was emphatically opposed to such a recommendation. While Jayaram supports the aims of such a campaign, he is of the viewpoint that its interests would not be best served with IFA at the helm. The argument being promoted posits that an organisation which is not sufficiently attuned to on-the-ground needs cannot advocate on behalf of a broad-based arts community comprising practitioners, funding and support agencies.

## **Key Challenges for the IFA**

*(i) Consortiums, governmental dysfunctionality and ‘the Indian soul’*

United in their criticism of the government’s relationship to the arts, respondents interpret its inaction and dysfunctionality as compounding the difficulties of an already under-resourced sector. The low levels of esteem with which the Ministry of Culture is regarded among the arts community for among other things failure to recognise the contemporary arts and culture as a social entitlement finds expression in statements of anger and exasperation – Anupam Poddar for instance remarks: ‘They say art is part of the Indian soul in a country like India, big deal you give a speech about it and you forget about it.’ He goes on to recommend that while he recognises the distinct mandate with which the IFA operates, he nonetheless comments, with a sense of urgency, that ‘if there is ever an opportunity to fund some kind of activity that is going to lobby the government, please do it because they need to be pushed from every direction to take this seriously’. These sentiments are echoed in Sengupta’s wish for ‘a consortium of people to spell out what are the conditions necessary for an interesting arts scene, the type of infrastructure needed, to be translated into a white paper presented to not only government but to philanthropy and corporate bodies.’ Given the visibility and influence in the arts community of the people making these noises, it is a matter of when not if a consortium or campaign of some description will materialise. While the IFA is likely to take its place at the table, the issue of whether or not it should heed Jayaram’s opinion that it should emphatically not be in the position of single-handedly steering such an initiative raises the question of the type of role it need play.



*(ii) The return of the repressed: an urban-rural divide*

An arguably misplaced perception prevails that there is over-representation of IFA grantees from metropolitan centres — Delhi and Bangalore for example — and lack of readiness and expertise to interpret applications that come from outside of such urban contexts, particularly rural areas. The same prejudice could be said to militate against non-art school trained artists who are disadvantaged both by not sharing a contact zone with funding bodies and at the point of selection processes that close the door to them not for reasons relating to their modes of artistic expression but rather on the basis of where they are positioned with respect to the contemporary art field. The inheritance of attitudes that are exclusionary within institutions and the wider field of arts and culture builds on distinctions that in the postmodern sense are less and less fixed, as Garimella notes: ‘Traditional artists are excluded which is really weird considering how much contemporary artists are turning to craft.’

*(iii) Beyond the oedipal struggle*

Several interviewees point toward the alienation of older artists — according to this viewpoint, regardless of the intention of doing something new, there is an assumption that their seniority in age will make it old. Garimella points out how artists who are senior in age don’t see themselves reflected in IFA’s programmes and neither does the organisation identify with individuals at this stage of their career: ‘Where is that space for a senior artist who wants to try something new in the context of their practice. What’s happening is there is an oedipal structure that’s being set up, if you’re only supporting young artists. Unfortunately, IFA programme officers find their own peers to give money to.’ Diane Campbell sees the excitement for artists who are new on the scene being internalised in how organisations address the field, with the result that mid-career or older artists simply don’t feel eligible or motivated to apply for funding. Although Creative India is open to these more senior artists, they have rarely succeeded in attracting the attention of this group. To address the bias working against senior artists and the opportunities being subsequently squandered, organisations need to rethink how they self-present to the field and the signals that are being given out.

*(iv) The view from the ground*

There is a perception that funders who fail to have an ear to the ground of what is happening in the art world are not fully equipped to make assessments of grant applications. Also, lack of visibility at openings and other visual art events makes them unlikely to solicit the interest of new applicants, resulting in a narrowing in the range of artists with whom there is an engagement. From the point of view of Christoph Storz, the IFA positions itself at a disadvantage by limiting its interactions with the field to formal meetings since these are far from being optimum environments in which a sense of the field can be formed and judgements subsequently made. Sheela Gowda makes a similar point, asking ‘how does a foundation acquaint itself with what’s happening on the ground, which is what is needed if you’re going to look at this new and old, interesting/not interesting, potential/without potential - how are you going to make those judgements?’ From these perspectives, it is not necessarily the type of practice that a funder professes to support that is utmost in importance but rather sensitivity and openness to what is what is happening at ground level.

*(v) Rigour in proposal writing: ‘forget about it!’*

A repeated criticism of funders, including IFA, is that of an expectation that artist’s projects map onto the language through which programmes are communicated. The punctiliousness of eligibility criteria for the EAP programme arguably inhibits applicants from submitting

proposals. Kakka goes as far as to say ‘The IFA application process is so intimidating, I think its not worth it I’ll just earn my money somewhere else ... See if you have a very set thing and I can’t reply to two of your questions because they don’t fit in with what I’m doing, I’ll say forget about it.’ For the IFA, one of its biggest challenges in this regard is finding a balance between a rigorous and flexible application process, one that is receptive to the field without lapsing into an ‘anything goes’ philosophy. A first step in achieving this goal is that of transforming into practice an already existing awareness that awards need not be reserved for the most immaculately written up grant proposals but those projects which are challenging and extending the boundaries of an artistic practice.

*(vi) The gallery and market whimsy*

A proclivity among younger artists to address the gallery through their art, as a means of enhancing their chances of getting an exhibition, compromises the integrity and perverts the course of development of artistic practices yet to reach maturation. Sengupta says that ‘Yes a lot of young artists get picked up by galleries very soon but that produces all sorts of pressures and they’re producing for the art fairs. I think young artists should take at least three years to settle into their work, outside of a transactional relationship with the galleries.’ In an environment where there is an absence of support structures with ‘every thing going into the IFA’ (Sengupta), the more inexperienced the artist the more vulnerable they are to the whimsies of the market. Without regular ground base funding, artists, particularly those at early career stage, are drawn towards attuning their practice to what they think are the demands of the market. Because the IFA is to a large extent without counterparts providing production grants to this category of artist, the making of judicious funding decisions cannot in itself address the quagmire within which it finds itself.

*(vii) Blindspots*

Oftentimes, there are low or zero levels of awareness of the existence of funding agencies among both young artists and those from rural backgrounds. According to visual artist Raghu Wodeyar, an early career artist who lives between his native village and Bangalore, ‘The ways of acquiring arts funding is alien to many of the young artists, especially for those who are from rural backgrounds.’ Even in cases where there is knowledge of funding bodies, many early career and village dwelling artists are greatly disadvantaged by English medium written application procedures. According to Raghu Wodeyar, ‘students from the villages are not good in English language, so they are hesitant and don’t apply’.

It is felt that it is more difficult for low profile young artists to attract the attention of funders who are perceived as being seduced by the publicity opportunities created through the support of well known names: ‘Rarely sponsors can be found for young artists. For well established artists it is easier to get funds as a lot of money and publicity is involved.’ Wodeyar calls a situation that is ‘mutually beneficial to senior artists and funding organizations’ an ‘open secret’. Although this point of view contradicts that of established artists and individuals working in the cultural sector who purport that grant bodies have insatiable appetites for break through artists, it is a sentiment that nonetheless exists on the ground.

## **Conclusions**

Agreement is unanimous that the existing network of organisations supporting contemporary art practice falls far short in having resources adequate to meet the needs of the field. One outgrowth

of a dearth in funding is that few artists without family support structures ever succeed in developing a practice, or generating income from alternative sources, that would allow them to become financially sustainable. Consequently, the drop out rate is infinitesimally higher for economically disadvantaged groups and a homogeneity skewed in favour of the upper middle classes has become a defining feature of contemporary visual art practice in India. Sengupta argues that far from it paying financially to work in the arts, the artist is expected to pay if he/she wants to make work: 'There are no security structures for a young artist to explore their practice for a year or so, as a result the profile of people entering the arts are from privileged backgrounds, its expensive to work in the arts.' This a viewpoint being echoed by others - from Garimella's point of view, inherited wealth is close to being a minimum requirement for those starting out in their careers, she says: 'Who is succeeding? Let's look at the success stories. Families who are supportive, through giving a piece of land for example, opens up a lot of opportunities. The only people that rise are the people who have figured out the economics, and that's why the arts scene is so thin here.' Due to the homogeneity this produces, it is an area of concern that can only be ignored at great expense to the vitality and diversity of visual arts practice.

Agility is a quality found to be lacking among the majority of funding bodies, IFA included. Without the in-built flexibility, an ability to recognise and engage with artists who are producing challenging new work is being impaired. This is in evidence for example when funders, slavishly following to the letter their own criteria for funding, miss the boat in supporting exciting new work that does not have a point of comparison in a predetermined set of programme objectives. This same impulse — of playing it safe — is seen as the driving force for funders to support the same set of artists year after year. Support for the tried and tested is reflected in Bhavna Kakkar's comment 'What I feel is in terms of residencies and funding, or awards there is a certain bunch of artists who get it and then they get everything, they get one award and they get the rest'.

The issue of the alienation of older artists is one that has recurred with sufficient frequency across the course of interviewing for singling out as being of noteworthy importance. While organisations champion the new and art works at the cutting edge of practice, institutional biases rob them of an ability to see older artists as originators in this regard – as Garimella puts it, if 'Someone who is 50 and wants to do print making for the first time are they going to do it?' Additionally, senior artists rarely have the feeling of being addressed or seeing themselves reflected in the language of funding bodies and other arts organisations. If the new is yoked simply to artists fitting into a prescribed age bracket, the innovation of senior artists will continue to go unrecognised and unsupported.

Of equal concern is that of a tendency for new media/digital art, oftentimes of mediocre quality, to take precedence over other forms of visual art. Funders are seen as prone to supporting this mode of practice regardless of whether the work is breaking any artistic boundaries. Perhaps the most articulate expression of this is voiced by Storz who says: 'Maybe you have to redefine what you mean by conventionality because the new sometimes comes more from the conventional corner than from the people who are just always on the surface, cause those people who are really rooted and struggling with their own past and their own deep culture when they make a move it has much more value than someone who is just doing something new.' In a related fashion, a perceived notion of what the gallery wants is being internalised by artists, particularly ones who are part of the younger set, impacting the type of work that is being produced. For example, Shivadas of Vadhera Art Gallery, sees a certain slickness as being a characteristic of exhibitions by recent art school graduates in the habit of outsourcing the production of their art

works. Their motivation for valuing a professional in appearance finish over questions of the work's conceptual intent and depth lies in what it is believed will float the gallery's interest.

Within the domain of arts funding in India, IFA is perceived as making a unique contribution to the visual arts sector. While the methodology and perspicacity of its decision making has been subject to ample critique, there is a consensus that it is not duplicating in its approach or role any other funding body or support agency in India today. Due in no small measure to the limited number of such entities, which can be broadly summarised as comprising Creative India, Outset, KHOJ, Goethe Institut, Pro Helvetia and Inlaaks, they succeed largely at working in a fashion that is complementary rather than overlapping. The opinion that much is to be done if a functional and robust arts scene is to develop is one that is widely shared. A high volume of respondents expressed a desire to participate in a concerted effort of lobbying the government to meet its obligations to arts and culture, the ground it would seem is ripe for progressing the funding debate and making change happen.

## **Appendix I: Questionnaire**

The following questions were used in interviews with *individuals working independently of large institutions*:

1. Is there a specific topic, type of practice or style of project that in your opinion is more attractive to funding agencies in the current moment?
2. Are there visible trends in the proportional availability of funding for these streams in the visual arts: research, exhibitions, education and residency programmes, and publishing?
3. Can you offer reasons for the breakdown of funding across these categories?
4. Are there major variations in how funding bodies operate, for example in the setting of eligibility criteria, evaluation processes or modes of soliciting applicants?
5. Are there factors such as an artist's age and/or politics, the medium adopted, or the nature of their practice that negatively impact on the likelihood of attracting funding?
6. To what extent, if any, is regional geography a determining factor in grant allocation?
7. Who are the funding agencies with whom you are familiar that engage with the risk of supporting the development of new work?
8. By contrast, which funders are more invested in supporting work where exhibition is a bankable output?
9. What according to you are the gaps in arts funding in need of attention?

The following questions were used in interviews with *individuals leading or working within large institutions*:

1. What are the various kinds of art projects that your organization has funded over the last three years? (In terms of art form, thematic focus of the project, financial range.)
2. Does your organization have specified guidelines for the kinds of projects that you support? If yes, what are these and why are these important?
3. Are there particular regions or cities that are prioritized for funding? If so, can you offer reasons for these choices?
4. Does your organization fund process-based projects that may or may not include exhibition as an outcome?
5. What is the application process for artists seeking support?
6. Can you describe the selection process?

7. Can you offer any generalizations about the topicality of projects that are being funded? Are there any broad themes/subjects/topics that can be identified?
8. What changes do you as an organization notice in the types of art practices that the organization has been funding over the years?
9. As an organization, what are your views on arts funding and how do you locate the organizations efforts in this field?
10. How and from where does your organization get funding?
11. Have you a history and/or are you open to collaborating with other donors in the field of grant making?