

PREMONITIONS FOR AN ALTERED GROUND

Reflections from the Digital Edition of
Five Million Incidents

by
Kaushal Sapre
Aarushi Surana

Background

The digital edition of Five Million Incidents officially concluded on the 10th of November, 2020. We, Aarushi Surana and Kaushal Sapre, were affiliated with it in a range of organisational capacities - envisioning and anticipating its form and activity by conversing with the actants and other stakeholders, participating in infrastructural custodianship, technical facilitation, design and publicity. This document is meant to give an overview of the 3 month long project from our perspective, and also becomes a reflective attempt to retrace and sift through a multitudinous tangle of ideas, attempts, projections, experiments and experiences from the limited distance that we have achieved after its culmination.

Five Million Incidents (FMI) was a yearlong series of events organized by the Goethe Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan Delhi & Kolkata in collaboration with Raqs Media Collective. FMI was conceived as a process of churning with the intention of renewing the ecology of the art practices in India. Participation in FMI was based on responses to an open call which invited experiments with the possibilities of space, time, media, communication and interaction. The selected proposals were to be materialised in two phases or 'rounds' - round 1 took place from August to December 2019, with 48 individual projects, while round 2 involved 46 projects that were slated to be executed between January 2020 and May 2020.

An incident was conceptualized as a fold in time - an occurrence, an encounter, a sighting, an event in time and in memory. It signalled some kind of an activation, and an alertness to activity. An incident within Five Million Incidents could be open ended in terms of form, unconstrained in terms of disciplines, but at the same time grounded in modes of conscious engagement with time. Interestingly, the organizational roles within FMI borrowed from the language of biochemical reactions. It included the *catalysts* (Raqs Media Collective) who kickstarted the process with

provocative instigations and brought on board the *mentors* (Sanchayan Ghosh, Rupali Gupte, Vidya Shivdas and Sabih Ahmed) who cultivated the flows and intensities of the overlapping processes over time, with the *actants* who produced new activity by materialising their propositions, with help from the *custodians* (Farah Batool, Friso Maecker, Kanika Kuthalia Leonhard Emmerling, Sharmishta Sarkar and Shweta Wahi) who were the infrastructural caretakers for the individual projects as well as FMI as a whole, with the *host institutions* (Goethe Institut Delhi and Kolkata) which provided a wide infrastructural crucible.

Both of us witnessed the first round of FMI from different vantage points – as the designer responsible for FMI's visual identity (Aarushi), as an actant working to realise their own project (Kaushal, with Mohit Shelare) and as participant-observers of the myriad transformations and interplays that were being staged in the premises of Max Mueller Bhavan Delhi and Kolkata. Over the period of five months, we saw these spaces modulate from chaotic to contemplative, convivial to carnivalesque. At different points in time, we witnessed incidents of intimacy and companionship, durations of excitement and energetic frenzy and at times of fatigue and exhaustion. The fact that FMI could comfortably accommodate movements between such a range of temperaments is something interesting in itself. In that sense, although all the projects were at least in part moored to the spaces of MMB Delhi/Kolkata, we find it more compelling to think of FMI as a time.

In March 2020, the nationwide lockdown due to the ongoing pandemic, the resulting break in the flow of daily life and the lack of access to public spaces caused FMI to take a hiatus. After a few months of recalibration, it was decided to explore alternative possibilities for the execution of FMI projects, including the online mode. It was around this time that we were invited to contribute to the project.

Art Infrastructures and the Pandemic

It has been interesting to observe how the art fields in India and elsewhere have responded to the conditions posed by the pandemic. On the one hand, there has been a sudden influx of web based forms of production and dissemination like websites and social media accounts, online displays and viewing rooms, online education in art schools, digital art grants, online residencies, webinars and livestreamed exhibition walkthroughs. Barring notable exceptions, many of these attempts only work to reproduce the binaries between physical/virtual – either by conflating an artwork with its documentation, or by trying to duplicate physical architectures with their digital simulacra, or by framing themselves within the specialised categories of digital/new media. More often than not, these efforts only tend to emulate existing institutional power structures in another dimension, rarely disturbing the protocols and procedures that enable the circuits and networks of the art field.

On the other hand, we have also seen some innovative forms of artist-led initiatives and movements that leverage the same internet infrastructures to imagine alternative flows in the economy of ideas, resources and capital. Often anonymous, decentralised and covert, these temporary formations tend to work through the shared ownership of infrastructures – whether digital or physical – as an integral aspect of artistic labour. In that sense they exceed the representational logic of platforms and instead actively participate in reconfiguration of the field itself.

The pandemic struck at a time when we were witnessing the potency of self-organized forms of assembly all around us, from Delhi to Beirut to Hong Kong and beyond. Our experience of witnessing and participating in these instances of coming together taught us that they were not accidental formations or manufactured crowds, but rather, modes of living with others that were ingrained into practice. In these instances, we saw how different physical and digital platforms fed into each other to produce infrastructural matrices of sharing everything from discursive spaces, forums, electricity, shelters, food, internet, information,

slogans, tactics and time, to sharing an ethos.

These experiences coloured our initial impulses and questions around FMI – was there even a need for an FMI at this point in time? What could a project such as FMI accomplish? What role does art play in times of crisis? It would be unfair towards art practitioners to assume that this task is limited to offering care, respite, solidarity or therapy in these pandemic-stricken times. It invisibilizes efforts to negotiate with the economic instabilities, personal traumas and social inequalities that the pandemic has only magnified. It positions care as a product as opposed to a practice. For us, FMI became a potent site for us to rethink this relationship between the individual art practitioner and the institution. What excited us about FMI was the opportunity to contribute in generating emergent forms of coming together and occupying time in the current situation through thirty overlapping registers and trajectories. With each attempt, we were less interested in the objectified forms of artworks, and more interested in the conversations, methodologies and networks into which the actants would lead us. In that sense, we tried to approach FMI as a series of rehearsals, as experiments to measure the latent dispositions of the shifting infrastructures that surround us.

A Letter to the Actants

Our initial thoughts and speculations first reached the actants in the form of a letter in which we tried to articulate our approach towards Five Million Incidents in view of the changing conditions around us. The attempt was to avoid getting into the binaries of physical/virtual, or thinking in terms of a lack or a loss of ground. Rather, we tried to **reframe the situation** as an alteration of flows, and an opportunity for creative practitioners to experiment with **potent forms of activity and** **interplay**. We also tried to share within the letter a diverse set of sources that we were thinking through, in our own discussions.

The letter is reproduced here in full.

Hello,

Greetings from Five Million Incidents Team! Hope you are doing good.

As you are aware, the global pandemic and the resulting restrictions on mobility and activity have significantly altered the flow of daily life for us all. As a result, Goethe-Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan New Delhi & Kolkata will not be available to serve as the sites of intervention in the foreseeable future. Hence, we all need to reconsider our approach towards planning the execution of Five Million Incidents.

At its core, Five Million Incidents is a call to expand our notion of art as an extension of everyday experiences of life and to think about sharing and interacting as creative processes. With the radical shift in daily life around us, this cue has become even more relevant and immediate.

In keeping with this spirit, the following set of questions are meant to be open ended prompts to think about whether, and how, your initial propositions could materialize within alternative infrastructures including, but not limited to, the digital.

While most websites and online exhibitions tend to produce an individualised experience for the viewer, the game room [LikeLikeOnline](#) allows users to loiter around the space and have chance conversations with others. This assembling, coming together and sharing of resources is something that we need to intensively think about in the current time.

You may have been thinking about different forms of assembling in the context of your own projects - through openly accessible public gatherings or a series of clandestine meetings amongst a closed group of participants. It may be important for you to preserve anonymity within the group. You may be imagining multiple such groups. Or they may even evolve over time. By not having to anchor the project at the premises of Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan, perhaps newer forms of producing a public may emerge? **It would therefore be helpful to think about what function does space perform in your project? How do you imagine a public for your project?**

Occupation of time is a core concern of Five Million Incidents. In the previous projects, Actants found innovative ways of interpreting this - for someone, it meant an intense possession of time through 15 hours and 48 minutes of

continuous drumming and for someone else, it meant producing fleeting conversations with an AI chatbot. Some thought about time in terms of fermentation, others in terms of a harvest. Time even became monetized in one of the projects.

But a lot has changed in the past few months. In a sense, the question of duration seems to be on everyone's minds - how long will this last? For many of us, this is a new experience of time - a time of withdrawal, of estrangement, of urgency, of boredom and of solitude. What has your experience of this time been like? **What could it mean to occupy time in the situation in which we find ourselves?**

Different infrastructures compel us to change the way we traditionally think about durations, distances, and time zones. They enable new metaphors and formulations to emerge through specific material conditions. 'Real-time' as a paradigm that is born out of contemporary networked media can be seen in action in diverse examples from weather monitoring websites to delivery apps. In other situations, time flows as a 'stream', from the on-board [live stream](#) of the International Space Station orbiting the earth, to the 24*7 live stream of the [Kaaba](#) in Mecca. Perhaps something like a splash in this stream is produced by Filmishmish, a 3 day protest broadcast by [Radio Al Hara](#), a pirate radio station from Palestine and shared across other alternative and pirate radio stations across the world. Sometimes, time becomes a condition for existence, like [this](#) website, which will self-destruct if it goes 24 hours without receiving a message. What forms do you imagine your project taking as it moves through time? How could we think about more porous and interactive forms of thinking through time?

There is a website called [drivemeinsane.com](#), which allows visitors to remotely control the lighting and other electrical fixtures of the website owner's home. One of the funniest features of the website is a TV screen in the physical space which displays anonymous messages that visitors leave on the website. What is interesting about the project is the way that it overlaps and connects different infrastructural layers - website, live stream, electricity, architecture - into a common experience. It would be important for us to think about the kind of infrastructure to which we have access - as actants, collaborators and participants. **Could these structures be reconfigured to materialise the spaces, situations and scenarios that we have been imagining?**

We hope that some of these questions, prompts and references open new ways of working on your projects.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Trajectories and Densities

The month of September was a delightful and an equally overwhelming time of going through the actants' responses to our prompts. This exchange and the conversations that it initiated exposed us to an incredible multiplicity of practices, languages and voices. The actants' responses ranged from tentative to introspective to confident, but they had an affirmative energy and an openness towards thinking together in new and unprecedented directions. The responses gave us a sense of the specific conditions that the actants were dealing with – working from Goa to Kolkata to Kochi to Srinagar to Pune to Delhi to Aligarh among other places, negotiating with internet speeds and personal crises.

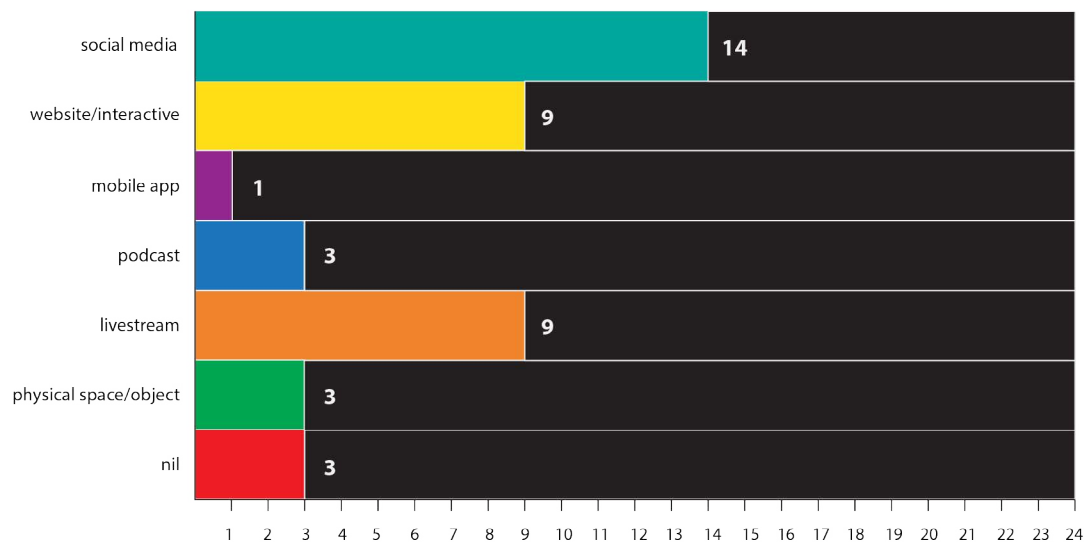
The responses also became a repository from which we could draw out insights. The different platforms, timelines, technologies and forms of assembly that the actants were thinking through allowed us to imagine the possible rhythms and the resonances within FMI. They also helped us narrow down the logistical questions that we needed to ask – both to the actants and also to the host institution. We could then gauge the scale and complexity of individual projects as well as FMI as a whole. A few crucial things became clearer through this exercise.

1. Multiplicities

We were really struck by the diversity of platforms, tools and methodologies that the actants were thinking through. The propositions ranged from online reading groups, blockchains, forums, zoom performances, podcasts, augmented reality apps, poetry jams, durational livestreams, workshops, editathons, interactive websites among others.

We needed to find a way to support and foster these individual trajectories without resorting to restrictive, centralising forces.

MEDIA DISTRIBUTION



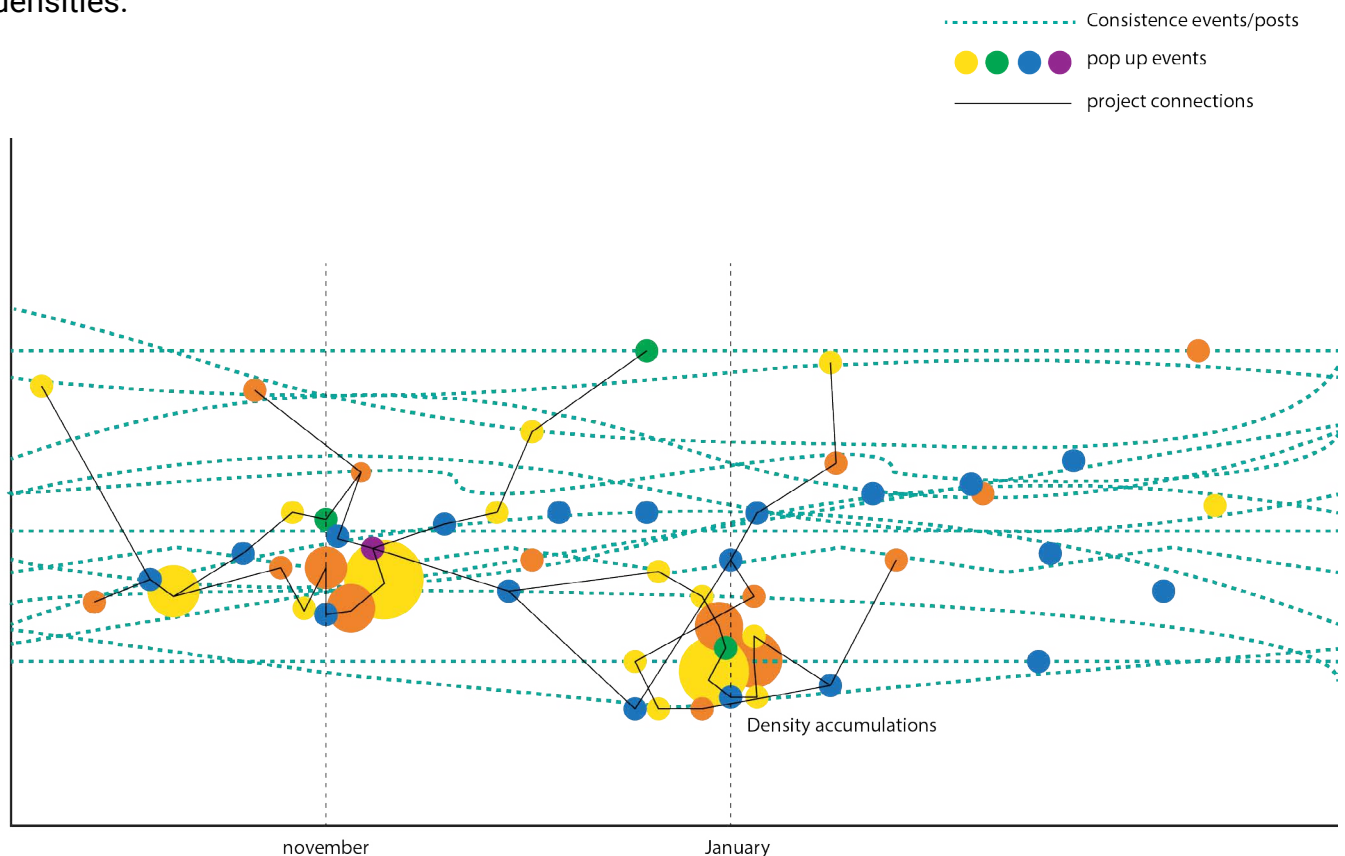
2. Entanglements

The ebbs and flows of the projects through time could be visualised as densities. We observed that the projects played out in time in broadly one of two ways –

As *latent lines* that stretched across time - they waved and zigzagged, stuttered and curved, and denoted the dynamics of the public life of a project along a duration.

As *live dots* marked in time - Short incidents that made splashes in time. In a way, dots are just really small lines.

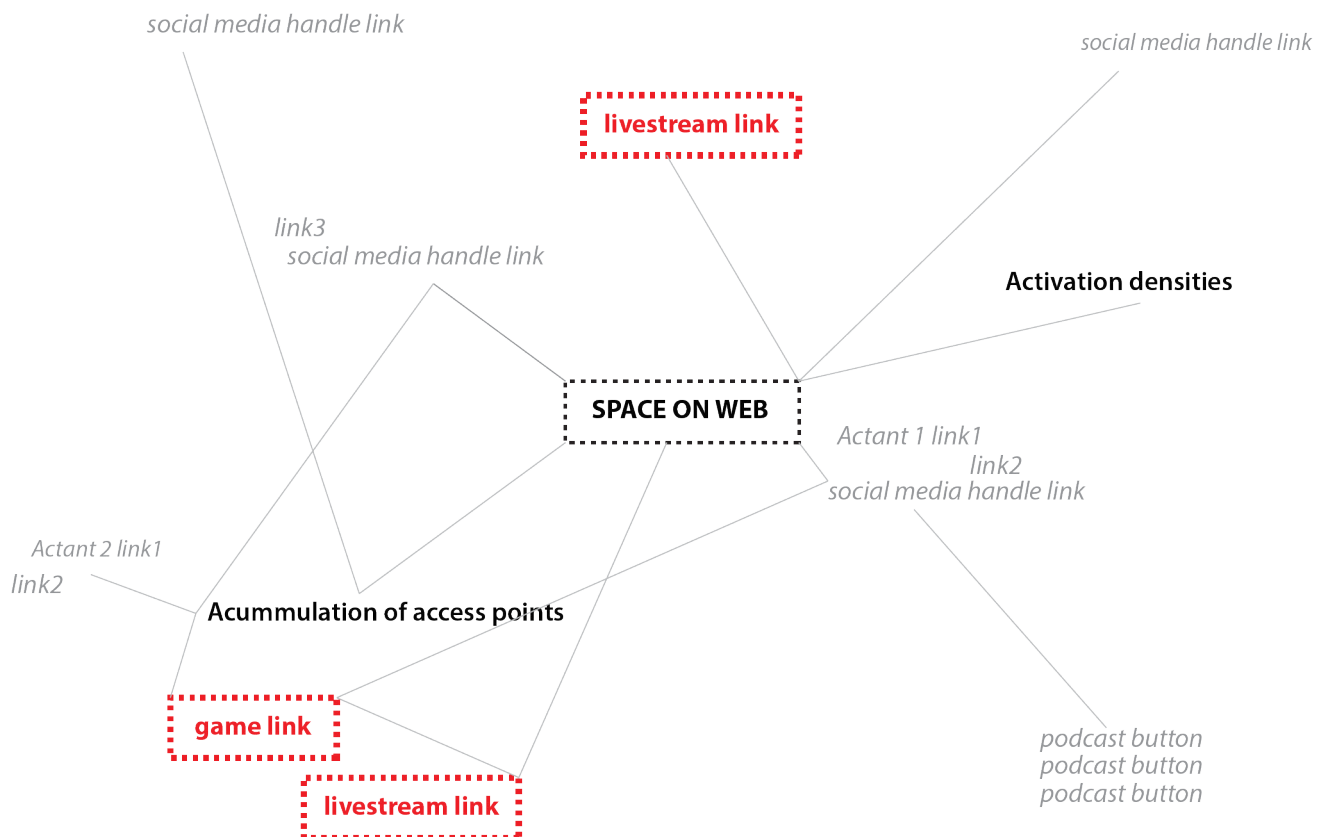
When visualised in this way, The FMI-time came to be articulated in terms of entanglements of varying densities.



3. Linkages

Hosting all the projects into a single centralised web infrastructure was not only impractical, but also limiting. Such a system would have to give individual projects the room to breathe, and at the same time be flexible enough to mould itself around the character of each project.

Instead, we tried to leverage the existing character of the web as a set of linkages. We tried to imagine a webpage that could serve as a gateway portal or a jumping off point into territories occupied by different projects – whether an independent website or a Facebook page or a Zoom meeting – through a series of hyperlinks.



Drawing Time

The institutional decision to terminate support towards Five Million Incidents after the 10th of November produced unanticipated shifts in the ways that we were visualising it. Our biggest source of energy at this time were the actants, who took the deadline as a creative challenge and reshaped the ways that they were thinking about their projects. While we acknowledge the logistical limitations of the institution, we do think about the missed possibility of **attuning** ourselves to the more deliberate, leisurely and measured moves that the actants would have made, had there been a longer durational ground to play in.

This period was also marked by intensive conversations with the actants on an individual basis. Through multiple meetings and correspondences, we witnessed the moulding and remoulding of the **multiple trajectories** on a granular level. In our deliberations, we tried to –

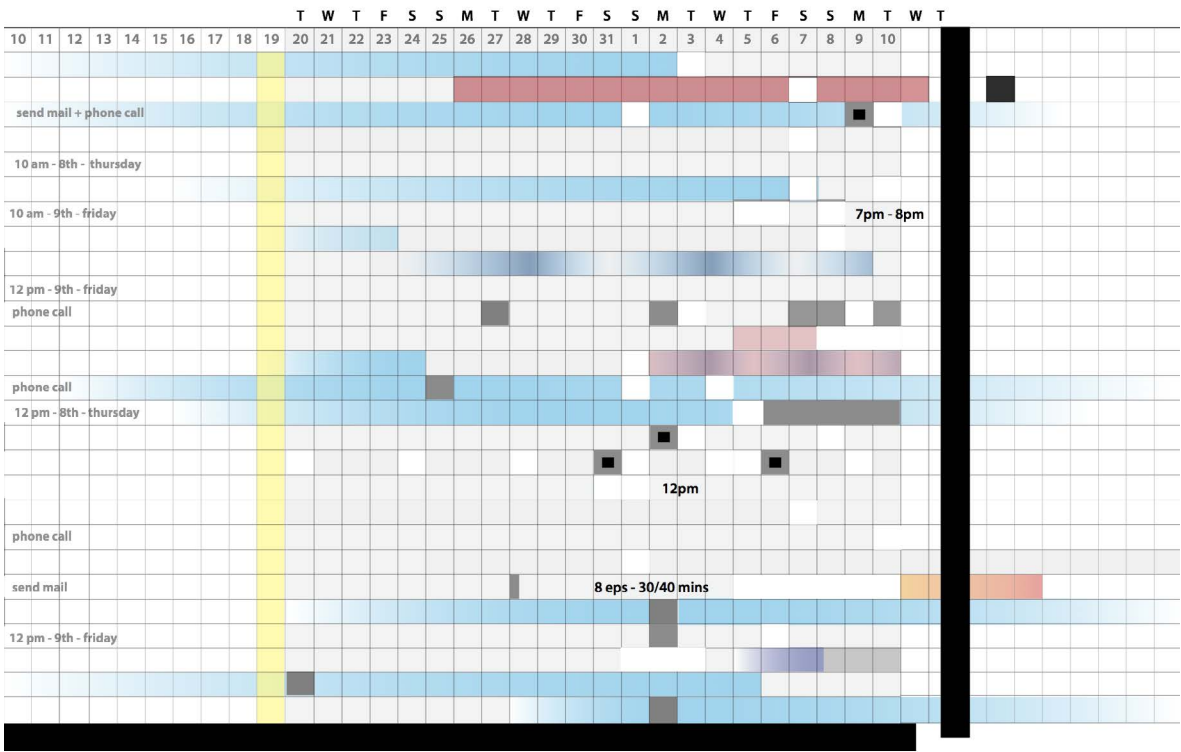
Encourage the distribution of outcomes through multiple forms and tried to approach sharing itself as a creative act.

Plot the technical complexities that we may encounter along the way and construct practical **timelines and common protocols.**

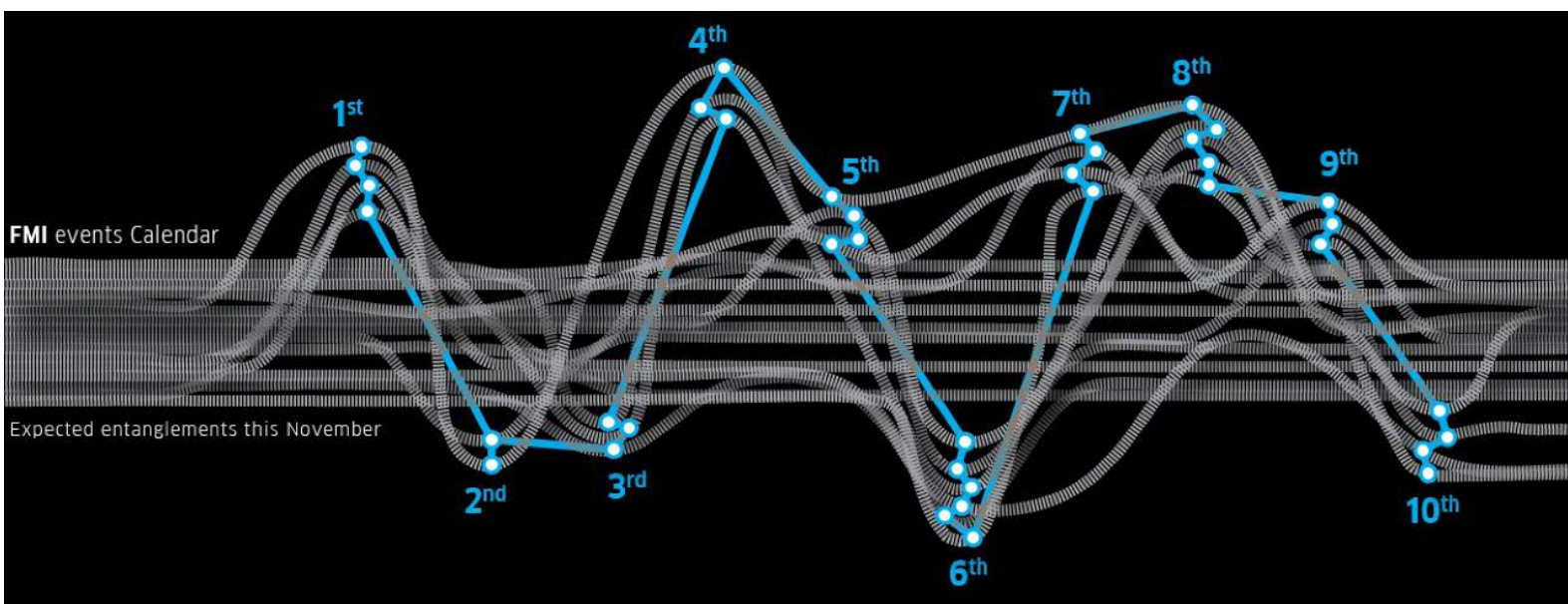
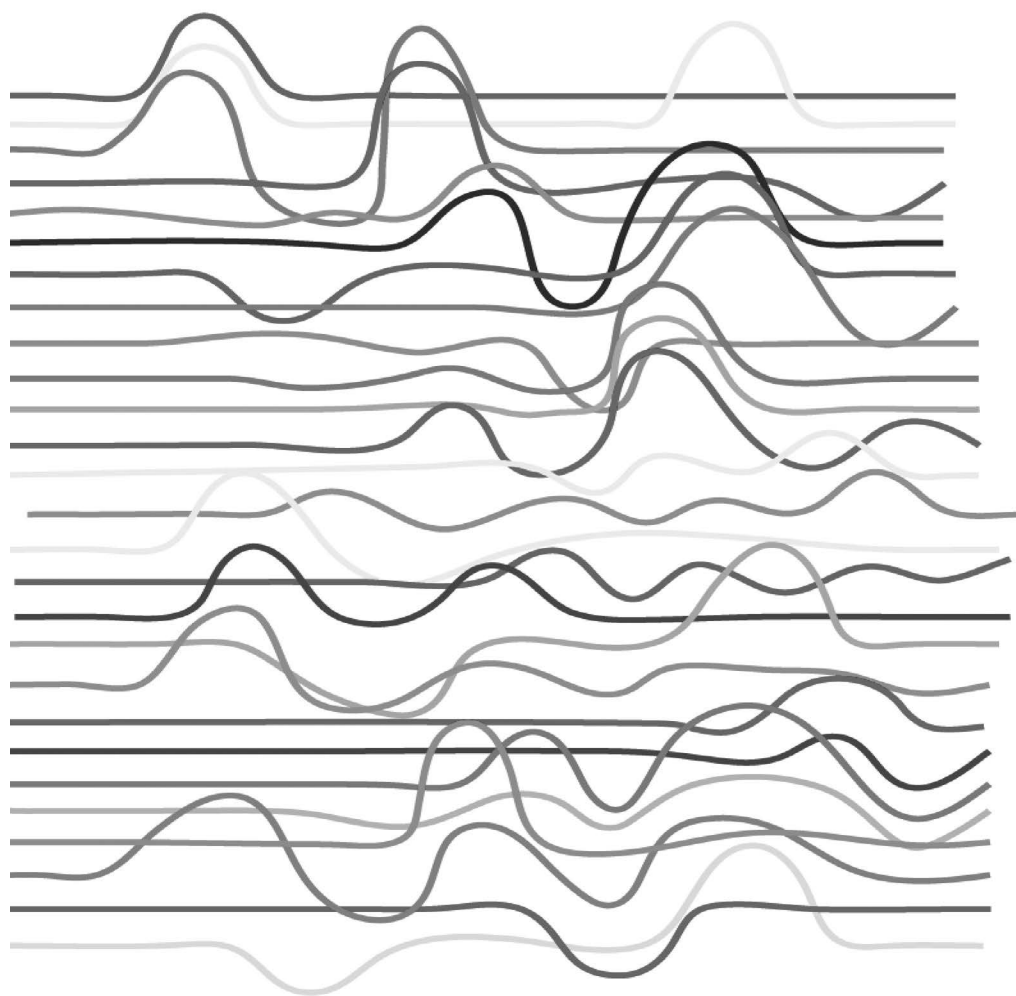
Share tools and resources. Activate our own networks to connect the actants to outside expertise wherever we could.

Consequently, our own image of FMI had to be rerendered through multiple iterations during this period. Each image gave us a new sense of what FMI could be, the **patterns** that it would make across time and space and the limitations that it had to reconcile with. In that sense, we think of these images as **portraits**, always presenting aspects, never the whole.

Four Portraits for FMI



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1		31 Oct nowrap; *f	/* white-space: nowrap; */		2 Nov	3 Nov	4 Nov	5 Nov	6 Nov	7 Nov	8 Nov	9 Nov	10 Nov	
2	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
3	LIVE LINKS													
4	12 pm to 4 pm	Traffic as a Metaphor - Zoom - 12 pm to 1 pm	Moments Before the Fall - Youtube - all day	Moments Before the Fall - Youtube - all day	Moments Before the Fall - Youtube - all day till 9 pm	Lihaaf - Youtube - 10 am to 6 pm	Suwendu?			Power & Pulp - Youtube 11 am to 2 pm	Power & Pulp - Youtube 11 am to 2 pm	Power & Pulp - Youtube 11 am to 2 pm		
5	4 pm to 8 pm	Body-A-Fair - Zoom - 4 pm to 6 pm	Aroh, interview 1 (instagram and youtube)	Aroh interview + call for registration posters			SilverFish - 6 pm to 8 pm Zoom	Comic Theorytelling - Youtube - 5.30 pm to 6.30 pm	Body-A-Fair - Zoom - 4 pm to 6 pm			Dictionary of Nonsense - Zoom - 10 am		
6						ASL - mozilla hubs - 8 pm to 9 pm	ASL - mozilla hubs - 8 pm to 9 pm	Chaot Meets Science and Spirituality in Growing Urgency - Zoom - 7 pm	ASL - mozilla hubs - 8 pm to 9 pm	Bedbug Intimacy - zoom 3pm	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - zoom 3 pm	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - zoom 3 pm		
7	8 pm to 12 pm	Moments Before the Fall - Youtube - 9 pm			On mining the ear for the nearly-but-not-q uite-there - Youtube - 8.30 pm				Kairol Time Auction - Zoom	Yarn Array - Youtube 6 pm	On mining the ear for the nearly-but-not-q uite-there - Youtube 5 pm to 6.30 pm	On mining the ear for the nearly-but-not-q uite-there - Youtube 5 pm to 6.30 pm		
8									Aroh's closed workshop	Anicca - Vishnuprasad - 7:30 pm	Namoo - 7pm			
9														
10			Bedbug Intimacy - phonecalls	Bedbug Intimacy - phonecalls	Bedbug Intimacy - phonecalls	Bedbug Intimacy - phonecalls	Bedbug Intimacy - phonecalls	Bedbug Intimacy - phonecalls	Bedbug Intimacy - phonecalls	Bedbug Intimacy - phonecalls	Bedbug Intimacy - phonecalls	Bedbug Intimacy - phonecalls		
11	PODCAST DROP					Train No. 54703 - soundcloud	Train No. 54703 - soundcloud	Train No. 54703 - soundcloud	Train No. 54703 - soundcloud	Train No. 54703 - soundcloud	Train No. 54703 - soundcloud	Train No. 54703 - soundcloud	Train No. 54703 - soundcloud	Train No. 54703 - soundcloud
12		Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - soundcloud	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - soundcloud	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - soundcloud	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - soundcloud	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - soundcloud	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - soundcloud	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - soundcloud	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - soundcloud	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - soundcloud	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - soundcloud	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts - soundcloud		
13												Connecting the Lines - soundcloud		



FMI Webpage

FIVE MILLION INCIDENTS

Digital Edition: 1-10 November

Actants	5 Nov	6 Nov	7 Nov	8 Nov	9 Nov	10 Nov	Ongoing Projects
Anish Abraham Cherian	Lihaaf Arshi Ahmadzai YouTube 10 am to 6 pm	Searching for Suwendu Chatterjee YouTube 12 pm		Power & Pulp Rajyashri Goody YouTube 11 am to 2 pm	Power & Pulp Rajyashri Goody YouTube 11 am to 2 pm	Dictionary of Nonsense Krishnapriya CP, Narendran K Zoom Passcode: 492242 10 am	Dalit Art Archive Aroh Akunth
Anuj Maihotra & Suraj Prasad		SilverFish Atufa Rais, Tayyab	Comic Theorytelling John Xaviers		Arms From the Teeth Bazik Thilana	Power & Pulp Rajyashri	ASL Ranjana Dave
Aroh Akunth							A Man, Some Trees and A Dog Sukanya Chosh
Arshi Irshad Ahmadzai							Chaat Meets...A New World Order Shraddha Borawake
Atufa Rais, Talyab Hussain, Reshma Khatoon							Dictionary of Nonsense Krishnapriya CP, Narendran K
Awdhesh Tamrakar							

Actants	5 Nov	6 Nov	7 Nov	8 Nov	9 Nov	10 Nov	Ongoing Projects
Deepa Jayaraman		ASL Episodes Ranjana Dave Mozilla Hubs 8 pm to 9 pm	ASL Episodes Ranjana Dave Mozilla Hubs 8 pm to 9 pm	Chaat Meets...A New World Order Shraddha Borawake 7 pm Zoom Passcode: 593754	ASL Episodes Ranjana Dave Mozilla Hubs 8 pm to 9 pm	We the Photons Deepa Jayaraman YouTube 6 pm	Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts Sujit Malik
Hemavathy Guha							Connecting the Lines Khwaab Tanha Collective
John Xaviers							Coming out Party for the Androgynous Tree Anish Abraham Cherian
Krishnapriya CP and Narendran K							Lihaaf Arshi Ahmadzai
Madhuriya Dey							Shepard Tone
MR Vishnuprasad							
Namoos Bukhari							

Five Million Incidents is a year-long series of events, conceived by Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan New Delhi and Kolkata in collaboration with Raqs Media Collective. It invites experimentation with the possibilities of public space, time, media, communication and interaction

[YouTube](#) [Facebook](#) [Instagram](#) [Blog](#)



The FMI webpage was imagined as a port (in the sense of a place from where one embarks on a journey) and the links that it hosted were like portkeys (from Harry Potter – Items or objects used to transport anyone touching them to another predetermined location). This led to an engaging web development problem – from a frontend perspective we needed a webpage that people could use as a jumping off point, and from a backend perspective we needed a system that could allow us to make quick changes and updations to the schedule without costing us too much downtime.

As a possible solution, we mapped a web infrastructure where a remote hosted Google Sheet could be synced with a public facing webpage using the Google Docs API. Such a system would scan the Google Sheet and compare its contents with the webpage every half hour.

In this manner, any changes made in the Google Sheet would be automatically parsed and reflected on the webpage (with minimal delay and zero downtime). Another benefit of this system would be that multiple people could access the Google Sheet and edit it, while not having to worry about whether those changes are being reflected on the webpage.

We could only crack a part of the solution in the time that we could afford. Instead of a remote hosted Google Sheet, the webpage took its data from a .csv file stored offline. As a result, the webpage would have to be manually updated every time a schedule change was made. We are still working on the problem of syncing Google Docs API with an html frontend.

The existing sources of information dissemination about FMI on the web were distributed within the folds of the Goethe Institut website, or on the multiple social media channels. The webpage design had to accumulate these disparate sources while also providing crucial information like names, dates, times, platforms in a clean, readable interface. We also had to make sure that it was responsive and device agnostic (it needed to work well on laptops, tablets and mobile devices).

The webpage was built using html, css and p5.js and hosted as a github page. It can be viewed [here](#), and the code can be accessed from [here](#).

Publicity

There is an interesting difference between how information circulates in Facebook and Whatsapp (or social media platforms and messaging platforms in general). As tools for information dissemination go, they could be compared to a pinboard and a letter. While Facebook architecture makes it easy to widen the 'reach' of a post (number of people who viewed a piece of content), it cannot ensure what it calls 'engagement' (number of times someone took action on a post. That could mean clicking a link, sharing a post, making a reaction or leaving a comment). Whatsapp messages, by their very nature, are a more expectant form of information dissemination than a Facebook post. If nothing, it expects at least a blue tick. On the other hand, Whatsapp tries to control reach by imposing limits on the number of times a message can be shared and forwarded.

This distinction played out in an interesting manner during FMI. FMI's primary publicity assets were the [Five Million Incidents Facebook](#) page and the [@goetheinstitut_india](#) and [@goetheinstitut_kolkata](#) Instagram handles. The publicity material would be sourced from the actants, and would be amplified through the FMI assets along with additional content detailing the day's events and ongoing projects. Actants themselves would also post and share information about their projects through their own social media channels.

Apart from this, a common Whatsapp group consisting of all the actants slowly became a repository of posters, gifs, links, emoticons, stickers and other publicity material, which would enter multiple networks of circulation as forwards. The messages could be designed to be clickable, and could also be timed as reminders. This subterranean mode of flow proved to be a much more effective generator of publics. It is important to note that these acts of sharing were practised as a collective effort by the individual stakeholders, as opposed to the institutional voice that comes through in the social media posts. As a result, we observed that it was mostly the networks of the individual actants that formed the audience for their respective projects. This distinction could be a fruitful space to reflect on the role of the institution as an amplifier of voices.

Institutional Custodianship as Pedagogy

One of the most compelling things about FMI was that it often felt like a process of learning together. Material like short video/text tutorials about how to set up a livestream, considerations for hosting a zoom call, directions for building and circulating clickable Whatsapp forwards, lists of tools to build interactive websites, instructions to install third party apps on Android phones among other things, was produced and shared. There was also an exchange of works by other artists, films, interesting websites, texts, music and anecdotes. The *FMI digital edition* Whatsapp group became a forum of critical feedback, an amplifier of each other's calls to action, testing bed for works in progress and a space for camaraderie. The decentralised nature of the projects also meant that all of us had to take ownership of the modes of distribution – instead of producing videos we had to learn how to do livestreams; instead of just participating in webinars, we had to learn how to host them. This could best be exemplified in the way that the Goethe Institut Youtube account and Zoom account credentials circulated from actant to actant during the two weeks. For us, the most crucial aspect of engaging in these acts of teaching each other, was the process of learning how to communicate.

It is important to mark this space in between facilitating and learning, and to identify the natural affinity between the two. As active participants in the interplay between various institutions, this is a question that will stay with us for a while.

An Incident Among Incidents

The incident happened during John Xavier's livestream performance. As a chapter within his project *Comic Theortelling*, John had produced a staged TV interview with one of the characters of the story that he was developing – General Kuttanpillai, the chief of the army of the fictional country Gorillakkadu (played by himself). While the pre-recorded video was being livestreamed through the Goethe Institut Youtube channel, John was commenting in the live chat box using fake Youtube accounts of other characters from his story. With around 3 minutes of video broadcast remaining, a sudden technical glitch caused the stream to end.

After a few quick video calls, it was decided to capitalise on the situation instead of treating it as a problem. Together with John, we created a backstory to contextualise the abrupt end of the livestream (a cyberattack on the TV station where the supposed interview was taking place) and immediately circulated it through the FMI social media channels. John avidly participated in the 'coverup', mobilising the fake Facebook profiles that he had created as part of his project to comment on and share the posts. What resulted was a series of unplanned and unexpected encounters between the audience, John's fictional characters and the FMI Facebook page!

The complete video was then rerendered and uploaded on Youtube, this time appearing as a pre recorded interview. This was John's response to the incident –

"Thank you so much for uploading the full video with the banner and logo and for sharing the link! The interview has in fact prompted me to narrate the story in a different way! I'm doing the script for a 20 page sci-fi comic, as a battle between the animoid sovereign and nanobots using the human host Zemora... the hacking of television studio that we ascribed to Chinese hackers and Gorilla boys might actually been done by the nanobots who took asylum in Zemora! Will release the comic only after completing the entire book! I'll release process images meanwhile... sorry, for the rant on comic plans! "

Afterlife

How do we think about the afterlife of a project with the scope and the scale of FMI? In many ways, it is still playing out. Writing this report was our chance to go through the immense amount of documentation that was generated in the past few months. These documents are like clues. They never let us reconstruct a time, but rather only signify the possible ways in which things would have unfolded. It is only now that we are beginning to appreciate the scale of what got left behind, as opposed to what got disseminated in the processes of FMI. We wonder in how many ways could a project such as FMI be archived – in terms of artist proposals, project reports, lists of tools, tutorials, budget breakdowns, documentation of work, exhibitionary tactics, lists of vendors, github repositories, contact information of freelancers, research methodologies, email addresses. We are looking forward to seeing how this material gets compiled and disseminated into the public realm.

The logic of lines and dots that emerged from this process is an interesting clue. It posits a relationship between artistic practices and the contemporary technological regime. As opposed to the circular logic of incubating within the studio and periodically revealing within the exhibition, the contemporary condition requires us to modulate our practices in much more complex ways. At the same time, the situation comes with a possibility to take agency of the forces of distribution that determine the infrastructural terrain between individual practitioners and institutions. The artistic processes that unfolded around us during FMI were not limited to the production of singular art objects, but rather were more invested in producing an interplay between objects, situations, open calls, commissions, platforms, databases, gatherings, networks, temporary collectivities and shared experiences. As a result, each project produced a multitude of forms and engagements with different media in varying rhythms over a period of time. These tactics signify a crucial shift within art practices – from intermittent confinement to continuous modulation.

We can see more large scale online art endeavors on the horizon, and each will contribute to our conditioning of accessing discursive spaces, approaching art pedagogy and redefining institutional relationships. Platforms on the web usually have a tendency to conflate presence with hyperactivity. It is easy to lose oneself in these algorithmic rhythms of validation that misrecognize databases as communities. In this scenario, it was refreshing to watch the playfulness with which the actants approached these platforms, the astuteness with which they negotiated their own material conditions and the confidence with which they pushed the institution to its protocological limits. A friend of ours, Lantian Xie, described it in his characteristic way – *“palpably comfortable and gentle in its broad range of motion, and agile*

in thought, but not hasty, nor against haste, and noticeably not bitter or anxious - reminds me of that submarine volcano in hawaii called Lo'ihl, meaning 'in no big hurry', which smolders and bubbles a long long premonition of becoming land many millennia from now." Only time will tell how these complex propositions will contribute to reshaping the flows of capital, resources and ideas within and beyond the field, but through FMI we caught fleeting glimpses of what an infrastructure of despatialized, peer driven art practices could look like. In that sense, we would rather think of this project as a despatialized edition of FMI, rather than a 'digital' edition. We are curious to see how art institutions adapt and respond to these impulses and premonitions.

For us, FMI was a process of inculcation into many new practices and ways of working. We are immensely grateful to all the actants, their collaborators, Raqs Media Collective, the institutional custodians from Goethe Institut/Max Mueller Bhavan including Farah Batool, Kanika Kuthalia, Sharmistha Sarkar, Shweta Wahi and Annette Jacob for sharing the ownership of their processes with us. We were consistently amazed at the richness of thought and practice and the commitment with which they all approached their participation. We believe that there is still great unarticulated potential in the multitude of trajectories that were initiated, and we will always be on the lookout for the shapes they take and the dents they make.

Actants

Arshi Irshad Ahmadzai | *Lihaaf*

[Livestream](#), [short film](#), [Instagram Page](#)

A coming together of several women from Najibabad, Delhi to weave a 20-meter long lihaaf (quilt) over a period of many months. A steady stream of conversations, drawings, poetry, embroidery, photographs on the project's Instagram page. A day long livestream of the unfurled Lihaaf at Max Mueller Bhavan, Delhi.

Namoos Bukhari | *A Secret Visuality of Injustice*

[Animated film](#), [Zoom performance](#), [Discussion page](#)

A lecture performance with animated videos and text that thinks through the production of altered sensoria that become a part of the lives of the survivors of pellet shotgun injuries in Kashmir. Video and animation by Ikroop Sandhu.

Hemavathy Guha | *Traffic as a Metaphor*

[Panel Discussion on Zoom](#), [Facebook Page](#)

A series of blog posts on the lives of traffic policemen in Delhi culminated into a forum to rethink the stillness of the mid-lockdown isolated life through the idea of traffic as a metaphor. Speakers included artists, pedagogues, anthropologists and ecologists. Moderated by Najrin Islam.

Speakers:

Anandamoy Banerji
Nitish Kumar Arora
Durga Kainthola
Dr. Prakash Tripathi
Hemavathy Guha

Suvendu Chatterjee | *In Search of Suvendu*

[Video Essay](#)

An autobiographical journey into the village of Gurandi in Odisha after a span of 32 years. A search that meanders through long lost

friendships, fragments of poetry, hazy memories and a radical form of communal life. Video edited by Annette Jacob using the photographs and stories by Suvendu Chatterjee.

Madhurjya Dey | *Shepard Tone*

[Interactive Website](#)

A wandering, user-driven story of two estranged brothers in 1989 Assam that moves between archival documents, paintings, letters, sculptures and text. Built using Twine, an open source tool for making interactive websites.

Atufa Rais, Taiyab Hussain, Reshma

Khatoon | *Silverfish*

[Series of Virtual Artist Presentations](#), [Zoom Gathering](#), [Short Film](#), [Facebook Page](#)

A steadily growing peer network of artists that moved like a silverfish between the internet infrastructures from Bengal to Aligarh to Haryana to Chittagong, through regular gatherings, virtual studio visits and sharing sessions that culminated in a public forum.

Sultana Zana | *Fieldness*

[Mobile App](#), [Website](#), [Instagram Page](#)

An open, decentralised database of non-human actants in the form of a mobile app used by mycophiles, cryptophiles, ecologists and nature enthusiasts. *Fieldness* allows users to plant seeds by geotagging a location where they find an incident of non-human life - a mycelium growth, a new species of fungus, an interestingly shaped tree.

Bazik Thlana | *Bedbug Intimacy*

[Arms from the Teeth - Zoom Poetry Jam](#)

[Do Let the Bedbugs Bite - Bedtime Stories Over a Phonecall](#)

[Manifesting ParaSitu - Online Workshop](#)

An online laboratory situation that unfolded in various modalities to think about politics of power and sexuality through the metaphor

of bedbugs. Events included a poetry jam (led by Matti Bakor War), automated phone calls (with technical support by Jaidev Deshpande from [-out-of-line-](#)) and a workshop (with Silvia Bombardini, Sanjita Majumder and Siegrun Salmanian).

Deepa Jayaraman | *Yarn Array*

[Sound and Animation](#), [Instagram](#)

A critical re-interpretation of classic children's storybook characters like Jabberwocky and Rumpelstiltskin from a racial lens, produced through a sustained, unfurling practice of making physical puppets, illustrations, shareable emoticons and an animated film (with sound by Sneha Khanwalkar).

Ranjana Dave | *ASL - Age Sex Location*

[3 Day chat performance in virtual rooms \(on Mozilla hubs\)](#), [Website](#)

An exploration of what it means to perform desire in digital infrastructures through the practice of sexting. A series of episodes where eight performers have deeply intimate encounters with each other staged within the virtual reality chatrooms of the platform [Mozilla Hubs](#).

Sonam Chaturvedi | *Kairoi Time Auction*

[Online Auction Website](#), [Instagram Page](#)

An online auction of the 33500 minutes of time that had accumulated in the time sensitive vending machines installed at MMB Delhi and Kolkata. To place a bid on a particular amount of time, you have to tell how you would spend it. Bids with the most votes win. Around 3000 minutes have already been auctioned off. (technical support by Ebaad Ansari, who built an open source Wordpress [plugin](#) for managing online auctions).

Sujit Mallik | *Loss of Horizon and Other Converging Acts*

[Online Residency](#), [Podcast](#), [Zoom Performance](#)

A ten day long process of crafting a tool, digging the earth and making new human and non-human friends that happened between

Hyderabad, Patna, Singur, Srinagar, Goa and Ghaziabad, punctuated with nightly updates in the form of podcasts and culminating in a performance over a Zoom call.

Co-Actants

Harsh Vardhan

Pramod Kumar

Pritam Das

Snober Jeelani Shah

Anish Cherian and Padmanabhan (technical support)

Aroh Akunth | *Dalit Art Archive*

[Instagram](#)

An ongoing art historical research programme, an ever expanding network of art practitioners, a repository of community knowledge and a series of public discussions and commissions with a focus on and driven by articulation from the perspective of Dalit peoples.

Vyom Mehta | *Pakistan se Paani*

[Instagram Travelogue](#)

A mediated visit to the city of Lahore, Pakistan. A two week long virtual itinerary through monuments, studio visits, bazaars, food joints and meetings with new acquaintances, where Instagram becomes not just a medium for a travelogue, but also a tool for making friends across the border.

Awdhesh Tamrakar | *Heads in the Cloud*

[Augmented Reality App](#), [Instagram](#), [Website](#)

An interactive augmented reality android application that plays with the mediated nature of our relationship with space and time by constructing virtual architectures that look like ruins from the future within our immediate surroundings.

Shraddha Borwade | *Chaat Meets...a New World Order*

[Game/Performance on Zoom](#), [Facebook](#)

An attempt to reactivate the thoughts, ideas and debates emerging from Louwrein Wijers' seminal 1990 symposium *Art meets Science*

and Spirituality in a changing Economy by reinterpreting, dispersing and circulating it's archival footage in various forms on social media. A game that explores the interconnectedness of things through the act of eating *pani puri*, played over a Zoom call by Shraddha and Louwrein herself.

Sukanya Ghosh | *A Man, Some Trees and A Dog*

[Instagram](#), [Video](#), [Stickers](#)

A meditation on the quotidian through the practice of drawing and erasing that took on a rich multitude of forms, media and modes of circulation - from wall murals, stop motion animations, flipbooks, gifs, instagram stickers, emoticons among others.

Krishnapriya C P and Narendran K | *The Dictionary of Nonsense*

[Website](#), [Film Screening](#), [Panel Discussions](#), [Online Workshop](#)

A programme of workshops, panel discussions, film screenings and gatherings that take the word nonsense as a point of departure, an idea explored linguistically, socially, politically and visually in a playful manner, to invoke humour and contemplation within the everyday.

Until & Unless: Decriminalising Queer India
Film Screening on Project Website
(1st to 10th November)

Negotiating Survival

Panel Discussion with Sintu Bagui, Nitu Giri, Bhaskar Biswas, Pratap Ghosh, Dr. Soma Roy
Moderated by Amelia Carter

Islamophobic Nationalism in India & the US
Workshop led by Dr. Nazia Kazi

Anuj Malhotra & Suraj Prasad | *The Reanimated Corpse*

[Facebook](#), [Website](#), [Zoom Meeting with Rafique Baghdadi](#), [Game](#) (Registration based)

A lost silent film from 1934 that gets reconstructed in different ways through a

cooperative game. The location scout hunting for a copy of the film makes an appearance on a late night Zoom call.

Khwaab Tanha Collective (Shiraz Hussain) | *Connecting the Lines*

[Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Podcast](#) (Ongoing)

An ongoing project of translation, circulation and dissemination of literature and poetry from Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi and other languages, manifested through illustrations, digital posters, podcasts, commissions, poetry addas and musical collaborations.

Anish Abraham Cherian | *Coming Out Party for the Androgynous Tree*

[Location based web app](#)

A series of technologically mediated incidents that try to heighten our encounter with other sentient lives. A geolocation based treasure hunt. An interactive website that plays sound pieces only when you stand under specific trees inside Lodi Garden, New Delhi.

Navkiran Natt | *Train No. 54703*

[Podcast](#)

A podcast series, covering the lives and stories of people of the infamous Cancer belt of Punjab. The podcasts bring voices from people onboard the train no. 54703 - the so called 'Cancer Express' - that ferries patients to Bikaner, Rajasthan for affordable treatment.

Interviewees:

Dr. Kanwaljit Kaur

Associate Professor in Economics, SGGA College, Sec-26, Chandigarh

Dr. Ajay Pal Natt

Physiotherapist, Sports and Exercise Scientist

Adeel Afzal

Digital Content Creator and Filmmaker based in Lahore

Amandeep Sandhu

Writer | Panjab: Journeys Through Fault Lines

Dr. Sukhpal Singh

Principal Economist in Agricultural Marketing, Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana

Rajyashree Goody | *Power & Pulp*

[Livestream Performance - Day 1, Day 2, Day 3, Website](#)

An attempt to subvert the oppressive power structures encoded within the sacred Hindu text *Manusmriti* by making paper pulp out of it's copies and repurposing it. An online exhibition of works done by various artists on, with and responding to paper made out of *Manusmriti* pulp. A three day long livestream of the laborious and contemplative process of pulping the *Manusmriti*.

Suvani Suri | *on mining the ear for the nearly-but-not-quite-there*

[An Index - Audio essay](#)

[A Splitting - Lecture performance](#)

A growing list of instances, objects, artefacts, stories and excavations of the 'inaudible', sourced from popular culture, science fiction literature, emerging research and histories of technologies, manifested in the form of an audio essay and a livestreamed lecture performance.

Pranay Dutta | *Moments Before the Fall*

[A digitally simulated cloudburst \(Excerpt\)](#)

A 72-hour uninterrupted livestream of a digitally rendered 3D simulation of a slowly gathering cumulonimbus cloud that steadily attains critical mass and results in a cloudburst and torrential rain. In its last hour, the cloudburst became a site for collectively listening to Suvani Suri's audio essay.

John Xaviers | *Comic Theortelling*

[Ongoing series of online comics](#)

[Livestreamed performance - An Interview with the Gorilla General](#)

A series of speculative propositions about the interplay between the art industry, state, military and finance through a constantly evolving meta-narrative that plays out in various forms of theory-fiction including comics, performance, storytelling and fake facebook profiles.

Nikita Teresa Sarkar | *Body-A-Fair*

[A Relay of Online Workshops](#)

A series of closed door workshops that explores the perceptions of the body and beauty through the act of making artworks with wax candles, while chit-chatting with people from different backgrounds including a person who has undergone plastic surgery, a visually impaired person and a martial artist.

MR Vishnuprasad | *anicca-Network*

[Phone Call to Nowhere: A Lecture Poiesis on](#)

[Anicca - Lecture performance on Zoom, Website](#)

An epistemological inquiry into the Buddhist concept of *anicca* or impermanence, in contrast with the Hindu/Brahmanic understanding of the primacy of permanence of body, self, events and objects. An act of theory-fiction that plays out over a video call.