

**RAQS MEDIA  
COLLECTIVE,  
AN INTERVIEW  
2021-2023**

**(BY) THE  
COLLECTIVE  
EYE**

# CONTENT

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# EARLY DAYS

- 01) Your collective exists since 1991. How did it happen that you joined forces? What did you do before? Did you know each other before?**
- 02) What made you decide to start a collective?**

1989 was a year of breakdowns and breakthroughs. In our lives it was a first sensation of time experienced in common with the world. When the year turned, we were students, coming into it through many upheavals in our urban experience. When we met each other in film school, the contours of the world were changing around us. The ferment of the documentary film was a strong force, and was replacing the contemplative moods of the art house cinema. The ground of the *image* was unstable.

Before meeting at film school, our paths had crossed faintly, in theatre—as two co-actors and a distant spectator. Our backgrounds were dissimilar. Film school teaches you to work collaboratively, as crews and teams, big and small. Debates and conversations after-hours shape the self, foster affinities, and sharpen antagonisms. As protagonists in the shaping of our own trajectories, we felt driven by many impulses and phantasms.

By 1991, when we finished our education, we were writing on art and documentary, watching cinema, making forays into educational films for country-wide university classrooms, working as assistants in documentaries, listening to public talks, participating in study circles, cooking, and making friends.

We formalized Raqs as a collective partnership while working together on our documentary essay on the relationship between photography, anthropometry, and the measurement of bodies and souls in the Andaman Islands in the Bay of Bengal, in 1992. That film still remains an unrealized project. The questions that arose—as we sailed on a ship, visited a panopticon, shot on 16mm, and made discoveries in archives—are still unraveling in our works.

### 03) You actually come from writing and film-making. How did you get into art?

In a formulation we wrote a few years ago we argued that there is a *sensation of thought* that pulses across bodies, mediums, images, sounds, gatherings, and weaves. This is probably why we have never demarcated mediums, modes, or forms. Just as this new century was about to begin we worked for over twenty-four months with two scholars to conceive and invent Sarai, as a *to-gather* space and a *riverine* process, to work in a sustained and inter-disciplinary way.

Our early interest in the nascent Internet and desktop publishing made us alert to a hyperlinked opening beyond the single-screen, and also to the structures of how knowledge is produced and distributed, and how it accretes. The hierarchies, collisions, and anxieties of intelligences between humans, and between humans and machines, kept us in deep churning. We anticipated that the world of politics, art, and cinema, would undergo tremendous transformation under pressure from an enlarging, unstoppable, communicative infrastructure. This double-take on infrastructure, as something to invent and innovate while being transformed by its spread and thickness, is what brought us closer to the intimations, impulses, and questions beginning to be addressed within contemporary art then.

When Sarai opened to the world in February 2001, several contemporary artists were invited and shared their practice and work. For example, Graham Harwood, from what was then Mongrel (in UK), shared his work with the photocopier and the high-security prisoners' narratives of self and the world. We were interested in the multiplication of sites and infrastructures of knowledge production.

To us, at the turn of the century, contemporary art—artists, curators, and milieus—was asking the most pertinent, the most urgent questions. An intimation of a new time came from within these. Sarai, and we, became part of this probing and thinking. Today, infrastructure, or social media, or collaborative practice, or urban experience, or media implosions are all part of critical common sense. But it was not so in 2000. We, in some measure, brought these questions into art arenas through works, processes, and sources.

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In the media lab at Sarai we experimented with ways to create platforms, interfaces, and procedures of collaborative working and sharing. When Okwui Enwezor, as artistic director of Documenta 11, started a conversation with us, we were making art works, running discussion lists on media and urban experience, editing books, designing cultural software to extend the ethics of free software, creating protocols of milieus for research and practice with many, starting conversations on common ground of knowledge with young people in a contested neighbourhood in Delhi, and pursuing questions arising from the legal violence that was defining the city.

### 04) Was there an original idea, and what has changed over time?

### 05) How did the name 'Raqs' come about, and what does the name say about the orientation and working methods of your collective?

### 06) You associate your name with 'kinetic contemplation'. What does that mean exactly?

In 1991, the live telecast of the Gulf War signposted a newness in the media ecology. It appeared in our conversations as a demand to each other to think harder about what one is stepping into as a professional. Meanwhile, around the same time, the Indian state was recalibrating itself, through its institutions and interventions, to accelerate the economy. There was a proliferation of opportunities and technologies. There was a euphoria of and in 'big media', and localised schema by which this media was to be accessed were getting redefined. The word 'media' in our name carries this charge, retains our insistence on the import of this ecology on our world.

The name 'Raqs' was first spoken between us sometime that year in an informal, three-table shack called *Kitkat* that operated its tiny but eclectic 'Chinese' kitchen out of a food truck next to a gas station and an electricity sub-station. Nearby, the road wound towards the seven hundred-year-old cosmopolitan niche of solace for the poor and the safe, the *dargah*, sacred mausoleum of the beloved sufi saint Nizamuddin Auliya and the poet Amir Khusrau. It's a place where you can be inward while being in a multitude, or lose

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yourself in a collective reverie of a devotional song. The GDP of the country was about 321 billion USD, and 850 million people were eking out a living in it.

We *had* to pull in this sensation—of being with each other inside a whirlwind of different times, turbulences, emanations, callings, futurities, languages, sentiments, intoxications, geographies. It's there in the word 'raqs', which we translate to mean 'kinetic contemplation'.

We still like Chinese food. We love the sounds of languages. We try and stay open to a febrile awakening that comes with transient, ephemeral, enduring sensations of being in this world.

# FRIENDSHIP

- 07) **One gets the impression that your collective is based on friendship. How do you see the relationship between friendship and the collective?**
- 08) **What do you understand by “friendship” and what does friendship have to do with “caring”?**
- 09) **How can friendship, which is often located in the private sphere, also be lived in the public community and publicly in such a way that society becomes a different, less selfish and self-interested society?**
- 10) **Many collectives only last a few years. What makes the happy and fortunate cohesion between you also in terms of looking at the world?**
- 11) **Where do your differences lie? How productive are they for collective practice? What are your similarities?**

Friendship is a practice of *breach* within a common experience of growing up and living in institutions—in families, schools, colleges, and later the rehearsal and reproduction of the inherited wisdom of the

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social, in work places and public life. And then there are the long shadows of the absence of these institutions considered as gaps, or lack, in people's lives. This movement of relevance as vertical progression in how life must be lived is consolidated through laws and values. It is within this labyrinth of verticality that niches of friendship appear, and are fostered. They find their interstices, lateral affections, and awkward toeholds amidst hierarchies. They produce dialects of micro-ecologies that are fragile and shifting. That's probably a reason why friendship gets such scarce mention in languages of intellectual and conceptual work. It is a spirit that can light up a bonfire of loyalties, or get torched in the fire of loyalties.

Friendship is a recognisable affection in cinema and literature, songs and ballads, but is often consumed through the pathos of romantic love (even when appearing as a misrecognition). Or it is subsumed into the love of the nation, or the team, or the number of followers in platform capitalism, or even as transcendence, a merging with God, the great friend of many mystic cosmologies. But what then of *Pamphilos*, the friend of all, secured even in the hold of old debris of a shipwreck in the deep sea?

As a value, friendship knocks at many kinds of belongings, and especially intersectional sites of co-presence. It is a threshold-affect. It keeps a space of non-captive contingencies open. Could that be a reason why young people today evoke friendship as way of life? It keeps revered conclusions of life at abeyance, and in breach of the codes that tend to stabilize and settle living. It will be a big transformation when our ideas of the planet shift from her being mother-earth to becoming friend-earth. A friend can get angry, be critical, betray, hurt, love, care, not-care, refuse a consensus, and remain outside of your demands or needs of transcendental promises. Caring is inherent here.

Collective practice lives within the verticality of living and the laterality of friendship. It is a generative gathering, and an unsettled milieu. For us, our collective practice has lived by a process of continuous-extending—into different milieus and practices. Without that it would probably find it difficult to gauge itself—because it is not following footprints, and there are no guaranteed social mores to give it its self-image. It has to be inventive of its own

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codes. Unsettling needs its own forms of care. The adversarial, the argumentative, the trusting, the drifting, the stuttering, the fermenting, the fallow(-ing), the shifting of foregrounds of prominence and what is today being called “main character energy”—all these jostle and collide. This is the vibrancy of a collective. The fabric of the mundane, the everyday, the non-transactional, is based on friendship.

How each of the three of us understand, live, and express this is polyvalent. Our propensities differ, so do our gradients towards other milieus. A collective does not only encourage its participants; it also de-accelerates trajectories, and this can be productive as well as explosive. Perhaps how a collective withstands these micro-climates within it—of thawing and hibernating, exhilaration and tremor, the personal and the call of the personal—is the life of the collective. Thinking is not a secret act—that is the heart-beat of a collective.

When we began Raqs, it was a result of the camaraderie of shared time, shared curiosities, shared ideas of politics. It was a cresting of the belief that together we brought more to each other, and to what we were doing, than we could alone. That our differences, our non-fungibility, made for a multi-faceted form. We did not have to be like each other—quite the opposite. Manifestos don't settle well with the collective.

# INFLUENCE

## 29) How do literature and philosophy interact in your work?

We read everything. What gets scrawled on the walls of our city, messages and memes that circulate as the ephemera of our time, film scripts, works from different philosophical traditions and biographies, popular writing on the sciences and mathematics, genre fiction, especially speculative fiction and science fiction, dictionaries, sports journalism, books of patterns, comics, data sets, crime classifications and statistics, historical texts, lists of all kinds, poetry, time tables (and the poetry of time tables), transcripts from

courtrooms, interviews, dialogues, the fluctuations in the price of commodities, reports of archaeological excavations and astronomical observations. All these readings bring to our conversation a blurring of time-scale and horizon, and anticipate an open future. They sediment, grow, and revolt, ask for re-orientation, de-valuation, de-personalisation, inviting different mobilities.

When we read, we share what we read, narrate what we absorbed, or spin a yarn around it, ever in search for a response from each other. Even when all three of us have not read a text, the fact that one of us has draws the other two in. We try to read in English, Hindi, Bengali, and Urdu (and English, not just as a language, but as an enormous engine of translation). A self-aware philosophical essay or a speculative fiction is appreciated between us when it brings in *discord* in our understanding, or makes some concepts *in-operable*, triggers restlessness for other way of thinking. Sanding against the assumptions of our premises brings a wicked joy. And sometimes just the ability to hold ourselves against a formidable current of consensus is in itself an effort that we admire between us.

We read text as plastic material, as a temporary cease-fire of contest of affections and infections. We make effort to be with different philosophical traditions, as that is the contested force field—an advantage we inherited—in the post-colony. And so, too, the regular reading of demographic data and commodity prices unveils contests: just today demographic data is showing that there are beginning to be more women than men in India. That is a huge transformation. It happened over the years of us being a collective. Lifetimes do map onto trans-historical mutations; we all take time to absorb the philosophical implications of these alterations.

### 30) Are there philosophers and writers with whom you have a special closeness and who also form an inner core, the “essence” of your collective, and who can function as eternal discussion partners?

We have found many kinds of companions. Some of them are philosophers, poets, rebels, workers, fugitives, mystics, scientists, alchemists and visionaries. They straddle many different spaces, times, cultures. Your question makes us rejig our memory and search for books that would have been in common when we started together in film school—*Yuganta* (Irawati Karve), *Sculpting in Time* (Andrei Tarkovsky), *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Friedrich Engels), and *Kingdom’s End* (Saadat Hasan Manto). Naming them here is not to create an illusion of filiation and taxonomy, but to mark the complicated intellectual geography—a personal and critical readings of epics, a wondrous journey with moving image, a treatise that connects and analyses disparate histories of domination, a caustic poetry through bloody history—that we grew into, strayed from, and stayed with.

And there are other kinds of companions who emerge from within our world and work. These are figures of detour, return, or rebound. A *runaway rhinoceros* becomes an interlocutor about transgressive moves in history, a *robot-dog* talks to us about the relationship between labour, imagination and the snatching of time. A *yaksha* and a *yakshi* (river and forest spirits who also act as guardians of treasure) pose riddles and offer enigmas about common wealth and wellbeing. A teardrop begins to condense the salinity of feelings, a deep-sea diver salvages meanings in the shipwrecks of ideas, an oxygen cylinder offers a consideration about the length and brevity of breath. These figures are also philosophical riddles and enigmas. They emerge, merge, and submerge from and into our thinking. They talk to us. They egg us on towards possibilities.

This procedure that we live with, with one another, is also, slowly, a mode we have been bringing to peer and public inter-sections. By the *Sourcebook* (*Afterglow*, Yokohama Triennale 2020), the ‘sources’ through which we unsettle and invite turned into an open-source document, to be read, debated, and elaborated as a heuristic

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to new propositions and thought-geographies in the contemporary. We call it, after Svetlana Boym, the luminosity of friendship.

## CROSS CURRENTS

### 40) Your short film “31 Days” is a chronicle of the world from Delhi’s point of view, showing how complicated the dynamics between home and the world are. Can you describe this in detail?

In the State-imposed drastic lockdowns that started in end-March 2020, our daily life was curtailed, cut-off from one another. The rhythm and hum of the everyday—sitting across from one another at the studio table and working with a density of many elsewheres coursing through us—is a sensation we recognize and thrive in. Meanwhile, from December 2019 Delhi had become an epicenter of a huge upsurge of protest. Many thousands gathered every day, every evening, through the nights, in many parts of the city, and in many cities. There was reverie, there was fear, there were fierce questions. And then there was violence on the protestors, and the lockdown completely dismantled this upsurge. A million migrants started walking home to their villages for survival. *31 Days* emerged amidst this unrest, where the fraught passage between home and the world had to be thought.

Locked away from each other, we had to read the world back to each other. A noisy hum, a disquieting silence enveloped life. We had not encountered this before, and we were struggling to find that channel between us, or perhaps create it, which can site and hear this world, as well as utter it. *31 Days* is this inter-section. The *world* was no longer a place one could just open the door and walk into, and the *earth* began to be expressed in different ways. Living had to be *re-apprehended*.

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- 41) **As a collective based in India, how do you perceive the West? How do you experience the constructed dichotomy of—here the West and there the East—as this dysfunctional point of you?**
- 42) **How do you see this dichotomy being resolved? With which strategies?**

East and west are highly mobile configurations, transforming and transformed by currents. The word for east, *purab* in west-of-east India, denotes the humid, fecund current of the monsoon. The mutineers of 1857 were *purabias*, from the east. Indentured labour to the Caribbean, Africa, and East Asia, after slavery was abolished in the mid-19th century, was also *purabia*. When they left, songs of *viraaha* (parting), popularly called *bidesiya* (of an alien land and time) were sung. Co-passengers on ships called each other *jahaji-bhais*, those with brotherhood forged over the crossing of turbulent waters.

The artist Jimmy Durham, who recently passed away, talked of Eurasia, the continent. To him, it was key to the unmaking of sedimented binaries and civilizational fictions. When we call West Asia the *middle-east*, what we are calling in is not a continent but a geo-political configuration produced by empires. West Asia, over the last forty years, has been transformed by millions of workers from South Asia. In Arabic, the word for west, *maghrib* stands in for North Africa and, in our city, denotes a time for prayer at sunset. In East Asia, *west heavens* is a mythic India, a scenario of the adventures of a wise and mischievous monkey.

The more we understand and read the world—its knowledges, passages, empires, breakdowns, fraternities—the less it fits categories and habits of partition, and the more it demands inventive and creative ways of apprehending and narrating the world. In itself this querying is not new. Generations have grappled with it. But its intensities and contours and connections are differently volatile. Time, place, and identity are not property claims but contingent and tenurial; they traverse. There are moments of boundedness and affection to location, but they both grip and pass, like the monsoons.

- 43) **One of your wishes or goals as a collective is to create polyphony. How is this possible?**
- 44) **Is collective practice more effective for this intention?**

The world is polyphonous, but to absorb it needs a generosity of listening. This produces vulnerability, because listening has a way of unravelling the sutures of the self. Polyphony needs permeability. The architect Dilip da Cunha argues that the world is not a four-step hydrological cycle but an intricate water body. Not just a delta, even the granularity of a desert has wetness. Listening is such wetness of living. The football player Zidane says, sometimes on the ground, in the toughest of moments, he hears his own heartbeat, and at other times the specificity of a voice from the crowd, or then its roar.

In the surge of protests in Delhi on the contest of citizenship in late 2020, 80 year-old Bilkis Bano evoked generations by naming the seven that had come before her. Her narration went viral. She was narrating a few centuries. The milieu of the protest made what may have been an inter-generational dialogue within the fold of the domestic surge into the realm of the public, and the shape of time of the city was reconfigured.

Collective practice lives in and creates milieus, and voices, noises, roars, silences, silencing, nudging, speech, outbursts, and in- and out-of-tune, in- and out-of-turn knocks and whispers. All these make worlds. The hardening and withdrawal of affection for this polyphony makes for anacoustic reason, and arrogance. To be astonished by the world and to astonish it is to be *in-collective* with the polyphony of the world.

- 45) **Since you have worked in several places in the world, the local and the global are important to you. How do you see the relationship between the local and the global?**

Nissan, the car manufacturer, is a “local” industry in Yokohama, which is surprising to our friends in the ‘Gulf’, having grown up knowing it as the automobile that transformed the desert.



With the rise of platform media as mainstay communicative mediums between people, and the resultant nebulous formations of the political, loops of commerce, tests of civil liberties, we are in deep and intense entanglement. The separations of “embodied” local and “abstract” global help us to understand neither located-ness nor movement. And with climate change, the planet expresses itself again as an interconnected force-field, disallowing visions of the planet as an inert site of extraction and recreation.

For every place that we find ourselves in, we try to sense and amplify the inflection of an intersectional moment. For example, the port city of Liverpool cannot be understood without the emergence of containerisation and rapid disappearance of dockyard life worlds, or Pittsburgh without the history of 20th century steel production and war periods, or the Hooghly region without the rise and demise of the jute industry and the partition of the subcontinent.

While making *The Capital of Accumulation* in 2009–10, we moved between three cities—Mumbai, Berlin, and Warsaw—and saw and felt an interconnectedness of lives and ideas, histories of politics and cinema, public space and industry between these seemingly disparate nodes. We traced clues in the cities to assert and argue this. In the present, politics is increasingly being read and posited as anti-global or pro-local, which in a way wishes away the beauty and enormity of thinking everyone’s life in common. What is strange is that crises today—from climate change to financial markets to the pandemic—pose this *life in common*, and thought keeps bypassing and deferring its re-embodiment into life and thought.

# DELHI

## 46) How do the experiences you have in Delhi have an impact on your collective practice elsewhere?

In Delhi, monsoons drown and drench us. Every year, people are surprised by it. Unlike, say Mumbai or Kolkata, umbrellas and raincoats have never become part of Delhi’s sartorial skills! It’s a city, which, by the mid 20th century, turned its back to its river and dissipated its view of the horizon. Torrential rains and dust storms now stage the city’s inter-connectedness with other climates.

It’s a dense, layered, difficult city. Three decades of working life in this city have posed to us a challenge in naming and defining it. It keeps pulling away from stabilising narratives. It is one of the fastest growing urban conglomerations in the world. It has layers of time imbricated into its morphology. Most of its inhabitants have un-secured and fragile *tenorial* footholds in it. It is surrounded by an industrial world, but it keeps erupting, rupturing the rule of production time.

Its density and absurdity, inter-connectedness and incapacities, its turning away yet always searching horizons, its restlessness for disobedience—these are roundabouts and crossroads we search everywhere, both to learn from and to investigate. Urban memory is fickle, yet its sediments run deep. This contradiction is lived, narrated, and displaced. It is vital but easily dismissed. Many of our works in many cities carry this impulse and imprint, but only in our recent work on the public space, *Prater*, for *Hungry for Time* in Vienna, have we been able to call it by a name—*memory without memory*.

## 47) What is the relationship to your home country and its social, political and cultural contexts in your practice? Have you encountered any major problems or challenges in this regard?

One of the most intriguing relationships that modernity produced is with country, *as a nation with its own government, occupying a particular territory*. A historical sensibility alerts us that it is violence and a fictive imagination that produced the nation, and that elaborate instruments of policing and welfare keep it going. A nation is also a site where emancipatory energies come to a boil, and this keeps upturning its inner coherence. The problem becomes intractable when the very idea of historical agency is subsumed by the national imaginary. Outside the nation, the historical seems very un-ready to give breath to a subject-hood that may invent other ways.

Waves of movements, from women, the working-class, and from communities that bear the brunt of ecological damage, posit a challenge to the formation of solutions within the national framework, yet get subsumed by aggression, or by the juridical and procedural apparatus of the nation. Genocide and civil wars, rather than disbanding the nation, make claims to the alteration of national boundaries.

In India, minoritarian subjectivities and associations—such as around religion, anti-caste movements, life worlds of indigenous and ethnic groups, farmer protests, the women's movement—increasingly draw into debate the import of the constitutional morality of rights, of equality, of liberty over the ascending despotism that seems to draw its imaginary from the hierarchical *varna* segregation of duty-bound subservience to the sovereign and authority.

The last decade shows a nosedive of both economic activity and social mobility. This has combined with a state that speaks a monologue of threats, threats, and threats, with the latest on “saving the nation from civil society”! The wheel has fully turned in 70 years. As if *we the people* are to exit the imaginary of the nation-state and have to re-enter it with new accreditation. Life within the country is in turmoil.

Our work stays alert to this ferment. Some days, fear engulfs and on some days, a feeling of elation makes us buoyant. We work at thinking through ways to keep in conversation the sensibilities that make connections and fraternities across histories and territories, and to absorb the nuances and radical disruptions emerging from minoritarian positions and sites. The perimeter-of-the-self, and our contours of affections, are being drawn again, and again. This new decade may inaugurate rapid and intermittent fluctuations between closures and ruptures, bondage and reverie, hibernation and proliferation.

# CURATION

## 34) How did you become curators? What do you understand by that? How has your collective practice changed through curating?

2006, and thereabouts, was a period of immersion for us—in conversations, research projects, media works, and collaborations—at Sarai. Research areas were multiple: pirate and re-mix cultural practices, writing life within urban delirium, intellectual property conflicts and debates on the commons, Indic language computing, and, not least, examining heightened moves by the state towards information gathering through its aggressive hunger for documents. In the Sarai media-lab there was extensive dialogue and discussion on malleable and intermediary forms of publicness. When we were asked by Hans Christ and Iris Dressler to curate a fold within ‘On Difference #2’ at the Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, we proposed ‘*Building Sight*’.

For a few months we worked with filmmakers, cinematographers, urbanist, activists, popular culture archivists, those immersed in locality gatherings, to create a dense mix of creative activity, intellectual inquiry and social presences, while also drawing in the thriving online world that was finding intersections through Sarai. Our contribution was an elaborate experiment in inter-medial modes

where we broke away from hierarchy of forms and partitions of values—between the raw and cooked, the amateur and professional, enthusiast and connoisseur, and between scholar and informant. This was a continuation of the ethos that we had inaugurated and expressed with the setting up of Sarai, and which was finding form as well in the *Sarai Readers*, in neighborhood experiments, in networked multi-nodal research, and in public discussion lists.

Looking back, we recognize that the impulses in *'Building Sight'* have stayed with us. We remain excited in creating a gathering of intelligences, sensibilities, and ways of living so as to create the conditions for a collective *thriving*. Curation is a kind of practice of the making of arenas to create scenarios, of atmospheres, of milieux of comfort, care, freedom, and disagreements. Much of this happens informally, as part of the process, as we change and mutate, accepting spontaneity and unpredictability.

**35) Can you tell us more about your curatorial practice? How do you find your questions? What are your concerns and interests within this specific practice of yours? Where do they come from? How did you approach the curatorial work in each case? Can you clarify and concretise this with one or two examples?**

Currently we are proposing a *deltaic* ecology for the way in which we approach the curatorial. Our practice works its way through an interplay between what we call 'sources' and their flux, and a binding through *procedures* of co-inhabiting intellectual trajectories and tendencies. A river can have a 'source', or more than one 'source', but it is in its *coursing* that the streaming and rousing water becomes a river, an ecological and cultural geography of life and imagination. In its journey to the sea, it divides into tributaries, and is joined by streams of rivers that begin in other 'sources'. There are riverine islands. The river changes course, ebbs and flows. When it meets the sea, it often creates a rich and fragile deltaic ecology.

We locate 'sources' that excite us, with ideas, concepts, images or states of feeling that have accreted in our own journey. This constellation

is arrived at partly by research into the history, fables, topography, economy of a particular place or a network, partly by instinct, and partly from the spark and spin of the constant churning between, and within, us. These sources draw on minor moments of creation, or an exalted moment of reflection, or an oddity, or a forgotten manuscript, and we draw them in and place them alongside each other in non-rivalrous and non-hierarchical relation.

We enter into conversations with the artists and practitioners whom we slowly invite to engage with these sources, and this process leads to the formation of streams of multiplying materials, images, and correspondence. Continued interaction between 'source' and streams creates a landscape, a terrain. This terrain takes shape, both inside our (Raqs') minds, and in that which is exterior to us. It is in this inter-subjective world that the somatic, the affective, the conceptual relays through continuous, interrupted, and deferred translation, becoming a material event that can inhabit the space and time of an exhibition.

*'Why Not Ask Again'*, Shanghai Biennale 2016, initiated its conversation with two sources; one from within film history in India from the early 1970s, and the other a contemporary science fiction book from China. Both these sources meditate on the rupture of the late 1960s and articulate intensities and trajectories—part inconclusive, part suicidal, part epic—with a capacity for re-wiring the consciousness. It was a gambit that was elevated to intimate and fabulist zones by artists as well as "infra-curatorial" colleagues whom we invited as a fold within the biennale to express their paths with artists and thinkers whom they were already in dialogue with.

With *'Afterglow'*, Yokohama Triennale 2020, this *deltaic* process of *source* and *infra-curatorial* gathered an expressive force and awareness. We started with a *Sourcebook*, which was published and shared with the public, for debate and elaboration, seven months before the formal opening of the exhibition. Further, collective practices, such as the Discursive Justice Ensemble, took our impulse of extending the spatial and durational frame of the Triennale, and intensified both offline and online encounters through an orchestration and porosity between objects, animals, people, interfaces, cartographies, and speech acts.

**54) In the exhibition, you worked with artworks from the past and wove them into a dialogue with current, contemporary art making. What potential do you see in trans-temporality in the context of the exhibition? Would you consider trans-temporal approaches as a tool to rewrite the past and the future? Can you talk about other projects of yours in which trans-temporal approaches play a role?**

By the 1990s, the post-war transition narratives by which the world was *held* through the hierarchy of 'linear time-based stages' had lost its coherence and ability to narrate trans-global geographies, economic practices, movements of people and, of course, production and circulation of goods. International frameworks were being re-calibrated to a rapidly shifting world. Trans-temporality has to be seen within the context of an invitation to an uncharted account of time, as well as a search for an untried habitation of time. The contemporary emerges as a crisscross of ways of life, to be seen in conjunction with each other. This has an immense bearing on the way historical narratives had to *write in* and *make way for* an emergence of peoples written out of history. We were navigating an intellectual and cultural milieu that had no clear paths and was in turmoil.

What we have now named *infra-procedures of living*—modes of sharing, caring, curing, repairing, and asking after each other—needed a way of thinking. With the pandemic this has expressed itself fully, but in the early 2000s it was through innovating on and investigating thresholds and permeability of knowledge-infrastructures that we positioned a recognition of these modes. For instance, in Sarai, we were in dialogue and in an ecology of listening *with* a diversity of those that wanted not to be narrated but desired to speak to the world. This insistence was the propulsion that we carried through in many of the ways that we thought about historical time, the time of the contemporary, and subterranean presences.

We evoked the concept of seepage to argue the force and the capacity of these presences to transform the shape of time by bending the stubbornness of hard structures. Works such as *'Untold Intimacy*

*of Digits'* and *'Escapement'* are attempts to grasp and share a new globalized sensibility of time that does not hierarchize, which brings different historical traces in to the count of time, and which displaces the homogeneity of the time of modernity.

Recently, while making *'Provisions for Everybody'* and *'The Blood of Stars'*, we realized that our account of time has become even more protean. It is soaking in more configurations of material histories and ideas of life—from a meteorite older than earth, to the submerged paths of reindeers, to the inter-generational knowledge of living with animals, to the iron that courses through our bloodstream, to Neolithic remains, to pre-harvest fields, to bodily smells, to a desecrated stupa. A new surplus of life has to be considered. A coal seam, an iron mine, are condensations of millions of years, and in their extraction and its consumption a million years become fuel burned in a few seconds. This spectrum of temporalities brings with it a different 'trans-temporal' sense.

Our contention is that climate change, along with an unprecedented acceleration of information as well as automation-based production, obliterates accustomed ideas of time, and exerts a tremendous pressure to re-imagine the time of human habitation within a confusing matrix of distances between molecular and geological time, computational time and the proliferation of extinction, and the blurring scales of intimacies.

In a way, you can say that trans-temporality is an intimation of, and invitation to, this troubled and exhilarating shape of time.

# POLARITIES

- 55) Do you think there could be a way to befriend the subjects of the past and the present in order to overcome cultural supremacy?
- 56) What do you think about friendship between thoughts and ideas from different times and how do you relate the idea of friendship between things to your collective work?

In 2017, in the storage space of the Peoples' History Museum in Manchester, we found a hard tack biscuit baked by the Bakers Federation from the Paris Commune of 1871. Packed neatly in a box, it was labeled, simply, 'Biscuit from the Paris Commune'. It was an invitation to take a bite into a different taste of time, to savor history differently. We scanned it, made a 3d mould, and with the help of a baker, baked edible replicas of the communards' biscuit. From one it became many.

In our recent exhibition, *'Hungry for Time'* at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, we developed a repertoire of procedures—in order to navigate, bring close, re-associate, re-assemble, create anew, interrupt, detour, superimpose, express irreverence and intimacies, be disobedient to, and care for. We were engaging with works—masterworks, and works by unknown artists, both the greats and rehearsals—from a 300 year-old collection of a leading art school of European civilization. Here, dismantling cultural supremacy is to challenge the narratives by which it holds the world in its thrall, and re-narrate the world through a narrative to which it is unaccustomed. We bring in contemporary works as provocateurs, confrontationists, arsonists, and carers to a different anarchy of historical time. We see this as a call to a collective effort of *with-ness* that realigns the way in which culture has to be practiced, debated, and transmitted. It carries a charge of friendship, and of disobedience.

- 57) What do such intentions have to do with your cultural, Asian origins?
- 58) What can the West learn from the East and what can the East learn from the West?

A friend remarked that the import of Gautama Buddha being from Bihar (Northern India), and his ideas having travelled eastwards over centuries struck him late. His exclamation was an admittance to a disjoint: enormous distances—of travel, transmission, translation—were entailed in the ideas and yet seemed to remain *dormant* in the place of their birth, and how do we make sense of that? Archeologists trained in the methods of excavation of modern archeology found, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, buried in mounds and caves, a vast civilization that thought with the Buddha. Later, in mid 20th century, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the remarkable thinker of equality, found in the Buddha a companion to bring into the world a dispositional conversion to living with equality.

There is also, on the other hand, in Indic civilization, a *dominant* idea of time with a different valence, which depends on the time-tracker's position in the caste hierarchy. The time-sense of a person who is born with the sensibility that their life is at the apex of many births (because of the caste that they are born into) is staged different from the time-sense of a person who is condemned to climb up a harsh social ladder, apparently labouring across many lifetimes. In *'Hungry for Time'* there is a work by artist Rajashree Goody where she pulps the pages of the ur-text of caste codes, 'Manusmriti' (Manu's Code of Law). In the hours in which she enacts this performance of reducing the text of Manu's code, it could be said that she also annihilates the temporal span of many life-times.

In 2014, for *'Untimely Calendar'*, our solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, we made a person-sized 24-hour clock, with twenty four attributes of time—from the time of a blink, arcing to aeon, eclipse, breath, revolution, growth of a tree—one time giving way to another. These are all words around us in our common language; measures of time carried around by people even in their names. The time this clock indicates is of a thick nesting of many senses of time, in habitation.

With 'Afterglow', the Yokohama Triennale 2020, we elaborated on the multiplicity of dispositions, anxieties, prohibitions, and caring that order life around toxicity. In this we were deeply alert to the catastrophic realities of non-thinking and cruelty around toxicity in Indic civilization. This drew us further in to thinking with meltdown toxic nuclear events in Japan.

Between these images of time lie the contentious truths of our world and of the time that we are alive in.

# MONDIALITÉS

- 59) **What does collective time consciousness mean to you? Would you connect your thoughts on this with what Edouard Glissant described as “mondialité”?**
- 60) **Glissant’s approach also refers to a blending of cultures, which, however, does not imply the disappearance of cultures. It seems to me that you have dealt with this in depth. How do you interpret Glissant for you and your intentions?**
- 61) **To stay a little with Glissant and his thoughts on the transitions of cultures, which are not conceivable in isolation from each other: What does care mean in this context?**

Temporal sensibilities are a result of unpredictable concordances and collisions between the molecular, the bodily, the proximate, the intimate, the distant, the planetary, and the cosmic.

When we say that something happened two centuries ago, what we mean is that it happened across the distance of the time it takes for the earth to have revolved around the sun two hundred times. The average human heart beats about thirty five million times a year. The span of two hundred years, or the time in which the earth has been around the sun two hundred times, translates into seven billion heartbeats.

This is also a *nimish* (blink), a blip in the now in which the hearts of all of the seven billion

people alive on this planet beat once. And then this number escapes as we move to all those alive across a two hundred year period. Collective consciousness of time, for a specific interval, can begin to mean enigmatic and immeasurable worlds.

Translating Glissant’s ‘mondialité’ in terms of bodies, hearts, heartbeats, days and nights—one will get perplexing results. Translated into a sonic impulse, it will make for quite a percussive orchestra.

During the exhibition process of ‘Five Million Incidents’ that we orchestrated with the Goethe Institute, New Delhi, an artist invited us all to experience the night sky through a telescope in an observatory in a boarding school, near Delhi. The magnificence of the sky’s passage from twilight to early dawn—with planetary surfaces, textures in the craters of the moon, the radiance and densities of stars—was calming and yet spun a cognitive disequilibrium. It made us realize that thinking about ‘which contemporaneity’ to probe is akin to keeping patience for finding universes within the depth of universes.

Contemporaneity looks different depending on the queries we put to time. Care can begin to alert us to the entanglement of cultural processes and the claims on the meaning and expression by the excluded and the exceptional. Care could bring in a refusal to the freezing of identitarian stances, or a traumatic or glorious historical experience, and towards a migration into a transversal relationship with places, people, and histories.

- 62) **An essential question forming the basis of your work as a collective is: how do you perceive the world?**
- 63) **As an India-based collective, what is your relationship to place and time?**

Glissant’s understanding of the proximity and blending of cultures is in his notion of *comptoirs*—porous units of space that could not be thought of as colonies per se or as settlements, but more as fractious tenurial claims on space, as ‘long leases’ that were always and still remain contested. Once, on a trip past Chandernagore, situated by the formerly global waterway of the river Hooghly in

Bengal, we noted down a cascade of observations that might be worth sharing here, as a way of thinking about contact, and seepage.

“On a trip from Calcutta in a roomy Ambassador, up-river to Tribeni—a cluster of villages morphing into a small peri-urban township, we are distracted by the verdant chimneys of hundred year old Jute factories, tall tales about ancestors, boats, bridges, terra-cotta temples, steps leading to the water’s edge, red flags, hammer and sickle signs, funeral pyres, ruins, ramshackle trucks, rickshaws, a basilica with bathroom tiles, and the faint inscription of the Code Napoleon at the gates of the French ex-comptoir of Chandernagore—the cheek-by-jowl proximity of the shadows of retired colonial fantasies—English, French, Dutch, Portugese and the assorted remains of Bengal’s long twentieth century. So much time in so little space. On the way back. We cross the river, take the Eastern Bypass—a long curve of asphalt slicing through endless hues of green. Sleepy, vivid, choleric, copper, lush and liquid green. Coconut Palm, cow, brick kiln, kingfisher sitting on a branch by a pond. A distant train. Telegraph wires. Suddenly, space seems to stretch, grow, to fill the horizon to the brim with expectation.

Two thoughts about space mark the memory of this trip.

1. As history accumulates, time divides space
2. As one journey leaks into another the time given away on the way up is sometimes recovered (with interest) on the way down. And so space, sometimes multiplies time.

Note to selves after journey: does the density of layers of time lead to a thickening of the experience of space, and do large vistas, curving horizons and fast roads lead to a flattening of our sense of time?”

We have to go dancing backwards, forwards, sideways, and diagonally, awkwardly, through time and place. This allows for all sorts of questions to surface and erase, enabling the play of hypotheticals, speculatives, and counterfactuals. Practices of thawing frozen histories and categories is part of this dance.

Neuro-cognitive pastures are a shared world. Seizures and epiphanies, torrents and storms in the world—and the consciousness—can be

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nurtured and expressed through artistic practice, or poetry, or a call such as #defundthepolice emerging from the streets in one corner but storming the world.

# THRESHOLDS

**72) Your collective practice negotiates the boundary conditions of knowledge and art and the thresholds of access. I would like to know more about this.**

Recognition, breach, and the crossing of thresholds—it is through these that we critique and create. This brings us into the company of sportspersons and hackers! It allows us to be open to anti-hierarchical churnings, keeping us alert to shifting horizons. It keeps stability always at bay. An influential international conference that we were part of assembling at Sarai in 2005 was even called ‘*Contested Commons, Trespassing Publics*’.

At Sarai, one of the radical innovations we did was to do away with educational qualification as a criterion for applying for research or practice frameworks. Instead, care and attention was brought to what would constitute the *proposal*. This attitude invited in many people—a thick density of practices, tussles, and dialects expressive of myriad life-worlds came together into Sarai. By 2012, in *Sarai Reader 09* (an exhibitionary process with 100 artists over nine-months at Devi Art Foundation in Gurugram, near Delhi), this shared confidence articulated itself as a form where the exhibition opened with only proposals (along with light and structural interventions) for viewing. The invitation for the public was to come and share time with artists in conversation and in observation, and see a work emerge over a duration. (One artist took this to a different, poetic register, teasing viewers to thread in and out of his dream-time, for he slept through the days amidst works in the space.)

Another boundary innovation was to develop an intricate *public architecture* of peer-exchange and openness, with intermediary forms of *address* and *active thinking*. This public architecture combined online mailing

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lists, dedicated discussions, a building up of intellectual resources, translations, workshops, and the sharing of time, tea, and food. Time and energy were given to problems of multiple language access in the online world. This assembly of notes, nodes, technologies, people, practices, impulses created an extensible form of sharing and conversing, gesturing to an excitement of inhabiting, creating, and contributing to a time and a milieu. It produced a de-authored and shared world of ideas and insights, and this continues as a sediment till today in our cultural landscape. During the turbulence of the citizenship debate in the streets and highways of Delhi in early 2020, the discussions in the public lists of Sarai from 2003–05 came back into view to inform the short history of aggressive state procedures of legality and document-making. We feel that the ensembles of questions, experiments, and attempts undertaken at Sarai in thinking the *public architecture of knowledge* are yet to be adequately recognized and thought through.

In our understanding, knowledge is poorer and it ossifies if it is tied down within hierarchal rules prohibiting exchanges of different kinds of knowing. Artistic, cultural, and intellectual work is often a way to understand, to intuit, to anticipate, to dis-assemble, and to conjoin myriad forms of knowing, acting, and making. That is why we are fascinated by the unknowable; this may be a reason that attracts us to cultures of shadow-speech, or 'twilight language'.

We see in this threshold speech of twilight, (or, *sandhya bhasha*) made popular by the 15th century poet and weaver, Kabir—a world of labour, of men, women and animals, and devices, coming together and diverging in all sorts of ways. This stirring of twilight speech can provide us with the confidence to inhabit the 'now' in an attentive and playful way; with a coupling and uncoupling of gears and wings, of claws and hands, of hooves and feet, of algorithms and interfaces, of prostheses and parentheses. Here, *threshold* is a ludic state, a state of refusal of the acceptance of the divisions of life.

Jal kee mashulee taravar biaaee.  
Dekhath kutaraa lai gee bilaaee

Listen brother, how strange is now,  
I saw the lion herding the cow.  
The fish climbs a tree, the cat minds the dog

Ghorai chari bhais charaavan jaaee.  
Baahar bail gon ghar aae

The ox runs wild, the cart laden with stuff comes home  
the buffalo rides the horse and takes him around.

The language of these utterances premises itself on the recognition of the equality of intelligence between those who speak and those who listen. When the poet Kabir makes a buffalo ride a horse, he challenges and questions the terms of companionship between different forms of life. When he speaks of pregnant bulls and barren cows, he inverts the directions of potency and fertility; when he speaks of frogs that keep snakes as watchdogs, he challenges our notions of security, danger, and fear.

We like this way of trespassing, and of crossing thresholds.

### **73) In your artistic practice you have experimented with many forms of crowds. Can you give a few examples and also tell us what you are concerned with when you reflect on crowds?**

A crowd is an intermediate moment that arouses unpredictable cohesions always near a bend, towards disruption. It is an un-stable compression of time, in time. It oscillates within the triumvirate of modernity—citizen, public, and the masses—concepts that configure and territorialize the abstraction of the *people*.

Early in our memory of images, shared by many growing up in the sub-continent, there is this flickering black/white footage from 1947: partition refugees bulging out from trains, holding on precariously. This ur-image of mishap within the promise of nation-formation in the 20th century keeps getting narrated over and over in cinema, politics, governance, art, literature, and more, through



the tropes of nation and borders, political decisions and violence, greed and betrayal, lost worlds and new vistas. To us, the *crowd* in that moment-image is a fierce nitrate (and now pixel) memory, never fully exhausted nor tamed by narratives of nation, its mourning or its instrumentalities.

Interviewing the cinematographer K. K. Mahajan (in the mid-90s for our research into the history of cinematography in India) on his work for the filmmaker Mrinal Sen's turbulent Calcutta Trilogy (*Interview*, 1971; *Calcutta 71*, 1972; *Padatik*, The Guerilla Fighter, 1973) we registered the inventiveness that a making of the cinematic sense of crowd demands. Crowds call in a sense of threat and exhilaration, indeterminacy and a loss of self, a dislocation of rhythm and a foreboding of a coming storm. Is it an intimation of the making of a new?

In a recent work, staged in Athens, we offer a meditation on a drinking cup salvaged from a two thousand year-old shipwreck, with the word '*Pamphilos*' (Friend of All) written on it. For the layers that constituted the work, we engaged in conversation over many weeks, with many people. We wanted to, and continue to, think with this figure of crowded friendship, evoked both by the cup and the characters we met, staged, and quested for. A range appears, creating chaos in our cognitive field—permanent inhabitants, transients, travelers, resident-aliens, beings who come alive at dawn, at midnight, at siesta time, or at twilight. They traverse fluid constellations across actual spaces, desired inhabitations, and imagined cities.

Late into the night, sitting and discussing works with artists during the installation of the exhibition *Why Not Ask Again*, in Shanghai in November 2016, we received news that the Government of India had demonetized high value currency notes. This was about 87 percent of the currency in circulation. A fevered atmosphere gripped the nation and, over the next few days, we received images of meandering queues of disheveled people. In '*Re-Run*', shot in Shanghai in 2013, re-casting Henri Cartier Bresson's photograph of a run on a bank, we configured a knot of people pressing against itself. We desired an image of a crowd in movement, unfolding hundreds of gestures with each press of the hand and feet, creating both cohesion and escape, and yet able to break the invisible fourth wall of the frame to connect across time and place.

In 2016, looking at photographs of people queuing outside banks sent to us from India, we could see eyes looking at futures with astonished uncertainty. *Re-run* emerged from within crowds in history, drawing us close to other crowds.

Another moment in time, and another whorl: a sepia texture of human remains gradually emerges in the work '*The Surface of Each Day is a Different Planet*' (2009) and then the bones begin to speak of what it is to be configured as human. A photograph by Felice Beato taken in 1858 is brought under forensic pressure, and it yields an unexpected result—the victor is staging its own image of victory by arranging a ground with a crowd of bones of the vanquished. As the work unfolds and the forensic gaze focuses, we realize that the bones were congregated and configured to manufacture a never-present crowd. We return to this formation of deformed justice in *Hungry for Time* in Vienna (2021), with the plaster cast rehearsal sculptures in the collection of the Academy. In this instance, we recall these broken bodies from the sepulchral Glyptothek to evoke a bodily landscape.

In '*Not Yet At Ease*' (2018) we had heard crowded whispers written into letters sent home by soldiers from the Indian subcontinent in the European and Mesopotamian battlefields of the First World War. Restless voices whose shadows and murmurs grow over a hundred years, and as Toni Morrison reminds us: definitions belong to the definers, not the defined.

In 2007, during a visit to the archives in University of London, we found a handprint, in the Galton papers. This was from 1858, and the first moment that marks the long and brisk history of fingerprinting. To us, this handprint counts to an infinity of presences in the '*Unlikely Intimacy of Digits*' (2011), rendering the counting of heads of a billion people by the sovereign a futile exercise. The hand, which we animate, bring to life across time, solicits us instead to counter-count with it, to remember lost songs, or hymns, or the *asankha*, the infinite.

# WORKS & IMAGES





Raqs' Studio in Shahpur Jat, New Delhi  
Image courtesy: Raqs



"Bestiary", Laser jet digital print and gold foil on paper, 2021, heraldic imagery of animals that are extinct or in danger of extinction.  
Installation view: 'The Laughter of Tears', Kunstverein Braunschweig, Germany, 2021  
Photo: Stefan Stark  
Image courtesy: Kunstverein Braunschweig



"Communard Biscuits", edible hard tack biscuits (2017)

Baked in moulds made from a 3D scan of a preserved original biscuit from the Paris Commune (found in the holdings of the Peoples' History Museum, Manchester)

Installation view: 'Twilight Language', Whitworth Gallery, Manchester, 2017

Photo: Michael Pollard. Image courtesy: Whitworth Gallery



"The Capital of Accumulation", video diptych, 50 mins, 2010.  
Image from the diptych: on the left, recording of a reading of the  
'Accumulation of Capital' in the Rosa Luxemburg Electric Light Bulb  
Factory, Warsaw & on the right, image of a copy of 'The Accumulation  
of Capital' by Rosa Luxemburg, in a train speeding from Germany  
to Poland in 2009.  
First presented at HAU (Hebbel am Ufer), Berlin, 2010



'The Bending Man' from 'Coronation Park', 9 sculptures on pedestals that recall and transform the memory of Imperial British monumental sculpture formerly displayed in New Delhi.

Permanent installation view: Whitworth Gallery, Manchester  
Photo: Michael Pollard, Image courtesy: Whitworth Gallery

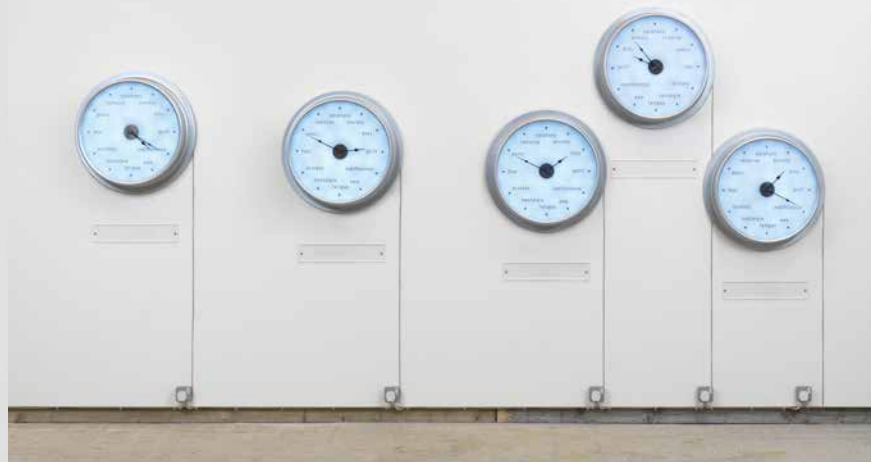
Detail from "Coronation Park", 9 sculptures on pedestals, Plaques emblazoned by cumulative texts riffing off George Orwell's story, "Shooting an Elephant", 2015. Installation view: 'All the World's Futures', Giardini, Venice Biennale, 2015

Image courtesy: Frith Street Gallery, London and Project 88, Mumbai



Detail from "Escapement", 27 clocks, video, sound, 2009. Each clock face has the words Epiphany, Anxiety, Duty, Guilt, Indifference, Awe, Fatigue, Nostalgia, Ecstasy, Fear, Panic and Remorse instead of the hours of the day.

Installation view: Raqs Media Collective, K21 Kunstsammlung KRW, Dusseldorf, 2018



"Escapement", 27 clocks, video, sound, 2009 Installation view: Frith Street Gallery, London, 2009. The 27 clocks index time zones at 24 cities [Brussels, Vilnius, Ramallah, Johannesburg, Baghdad, Mogadishu, Grozny, Kabul, New Delhi, Bangkok, Jakarta, Hanoi, Beijing, Tokyo, Sydney, Apia, Seattle, Mexico City, New York, Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Liverpool & Lagos] and 3 imaginary cities [Macon, Babel & Shangri-La]



"Lost Birds" from "A Measure of Anacoustic Reason", video, 7'16", 2005  
This image was recorded on a day following the rare occasion of rainfall at an arid site in the Mojavé Desert in California where commercial aircraft that are no longer in use, or that have been grounded, are left to the mercy of the elements. Many of them sink into the sand of the desert, and when it rains, the desert blossoms around these dead airplanes. Image from the work. First presented Icon: India Contemporary, Venice Biennale Collateral, 2005

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"Untitled", 2018-19

This curatorial intervention by Raqs, left untitled because although it is highly perceptible, it is also almost invisible. It lacks a name because it is barely there. It consists of a fabric fall on the glass facade of the front of the MACBA Building in Barcelona. This addition alters the hue of the air inside the building. It is, as if, in consequence, 'everything' changes inside the building around the visitor, even though 'nothing' apparently does. This intervention is both 'in the open' and 'in stealth' at the same time.

Installation View: 'In the Open or in Stealth: The Unruly Presence of an Intimate Future', MACBA, Barcelona, 2018-19

Courtesy: Museo de Arte Contemporaneo Barcelona (MACBA)

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“Pamphilos”, installation with lighthouse, felt sculpture, video, clay cups, and public conversations, 2019.  
 The title Pamphilos, meaning ‘friend of all’, refers to a word (Πάμφιλος) etched in Greek on a two thousand year old terra-cotta cup that was found in a shipwreck off the island of Antikythera in the Aegean Sea. The original cup is in the holdings of the Athens Archaeology Museum.  
 Installation view: Pamphilos, Athens Conservatory, Fast Forward Festival, Athens, 2019  
 Courtesy: Fast Forward Festival



“Please Join the Party” by Pirate Bay, 2008  
 The ‘Please Join the Party’ bus travelled with fifty revelers invited by the copyleft artists and intellectuals coalition—the Pirate Bay initiative—from Scandinavia to Italy to reach Bolzano. It left after Walpurgisnacht—a celebration of the commons with a bonfire of intellectual property—and culminated with the opening party of ‘The Rest of Now’ curated by Raqs Media Collective as part of Manifesta 07 at the ex-Alumix Factory site in Bolzano.  
 Installation view: The Rest of Now, Manifesta 07, Bolzano, 2008



“Reverse Engineering the Euphoria Machine”, sculpture, paper, small forms, videos, lighting, 2008  
 This extended ‘table top’ collage that features drawings, paper cut-outs, objects, models, toys and an array of videos, is an eclectic ‘diagnosis’ of the neurotic drive to convert human bodies and spirit into the ‘fuel’ that drives production and consumption in contemporary India, and contemporary capital. A textual motif that recurs recursively, at various points in this array is the terse three word phrase “we the fuel”. What the ‘we’ ignites is left unsaid, but not unspecified in the visual and symbolic clues scattered through the assemblage  
 Installation view: ‘Chalo India: A New Era in Indian Art’, Mori Museum, Tokyo, 2008–2009

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“The Robot Dog reads 1993–2014”, silk screen on acrylic, 2014 &  
 “Fruits of Labour”, orange trees originally placed on a factory floor, 2013  
 This installation brings together an image of a creature fashioned by a worker in his spare time while working at a steel factory in Pittsburgh USA, together with an array of the cover pages of more than two decades (1993–2014) of the print edition of a workers’ monthly newspaper (‘Faridabad Workers’ News’) published in the industrial township of Faridabad, bordering Delhi. In one of the issues of this paper, workers contributed notes containing their dreams of what they thought could happen on the site of their factories after they had been occupied and turned around to serve human desires rather than the needs of capital. One of these notes expressed a desire for an orange orchard in the grounds of a factory. This installation, when displayed at ‘Untimely Calendar’ exhibition of Raqs’ work at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Delhi, was built around a compressed version of an orange orchard. It had a strong, subtle and memorable citrus aroma.  
 Installation view: ‘Untimely Calendar’, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi 2014–2015

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"Strikes at Time", video diptych, 18'32", 2011

Image from the diptych film, which invokes the night, a refusal to be exhausted by labour, and the margins of large industrial spaces at the periphery of Delhi.

Made in dialogue with Jacques Ranciere's 'The Nights of Labour' and the posthumous reading of a worker's diary in Delhi.

First presented at 'Paris, Delhi, Bombay', Centre George Pompidou, Paris, 2011



Installation view of Level 3, Orbit 1, 'Why not Ask Again', the 11th edition of the Shanghai Biennale, 2016, curated by Raqs Media Collective. The 'levels' and 'orbits' referred to here are Raqs' terms for the horizontal and vertical constellations of art-works in the parcours of different parts of the Power Station of Art, the site for the Shanghai Biennale. Image courtesy Power Station of Art, Shanghai



“The Great Bare Mat”, hand-woven carpet, 2012  
Installation view: ‘The Great Bare Mat and Constellation’, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2012  
Image courtesy: Gardner Museum

“The Great Bare Mat Exchange”, Four conversations set in four corners on a woven carpet, titled “Where does nostalgia take us?”, “What does intelligence do for us?”, “What does accumulation do to us?”, and “Why does music move us?”, 2012  
View from above during conversation, ‘The Great Bare Mat and Constellation’, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2012  
Image courtesy: Pieranna Cavalchini



"Tears (are not only from weeping)", video, 6', 2021, animated magnification of a tear. Installation view: 'The Laughter of Tears', Kunstverein Braunschweig, 2021  
Photo: Stefan Stark  
Image courtesy: Kunstverein Braunschweig

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"Re-run", video loop, 2013. Re-Run thaws the frozen moment of a photograph of a run on a bank taken in Shanghai by Henri Cartier Bresson in 1948 during a time of financial upheaval through a video re-staging by Raqs in Film City Shanghai to mark the global economic downturn that began in 2008  
Installation view: 'In the Light of', Ark Gallery, Vadodara, 2021

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In Foreground:

"Dohas for Doha", five text-films of original couplets, in Arabic and English, video on LED, 2019.

In Background:

"Alive, with Cerussite and Peppered Moth", 3D printed PLA plastic, cast polyester resin, plywood, video projections, 2019.

Installation view: 'Still More World: Raqs Media Collective',

Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, 2019

Image courtesy: Raqs



"Utsushimi/Exhalation", sculpture, 2017. Utsushimi refers to Raqs' architectonic reading of the illuminated exhalation, or luminous breath, of an abandoned railway station's refusal to fade away as a relic.  
Installation view: site-specific permanent piece, Oku-Noto peninsula, Japan.  
Photo: Keizo Kioku  
Image courtesy: Art Front Gallery

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UID (Untold Intimacy of Digits), video loop, 2011  
This animated indigo imprint of a human hand—that seems to be counting on its fingers towards infinity—is a rendition of a handprint, taken in Bengal in 1858 as a marker of identity on a contract of payment for working on the building of a road. This print is reported to have sparked a whole course of research which culminated in the development (between the police departments of Calcutta and Scotland Yard in London) of fingerprinting for forensic purposes. This untold and intimate story of the destiny of digits is reprised to comment on the unfolding of another U.I.D process—the 'Unique Identification Database'—the collation of the largest biometric database ever, undertaken by the Government of India, consisting of fingerprint and iris data of all the residents of India. By counting to infinity, however, this handprint asks if the human is truly reducible to a number.  
Installation view: 'Raqs Media Collective', K21 Kunstsammlung NRW, Dusseldorf, 2018

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"The Ignition", lenticular panel diptych, 2020

The images of the seated, headless Buddha figure cleaved by this diptych are from what remains at the Kesariya stupa in Motihari district in Bihar, India, where the *Advice to the Kalamas (Kalama Sutra)*, a sermon by the Buddha, which celebrates the illumination that doubt ignites in the consciousness, was delivered. This image also occurs in 'Provisions for Everybody' a film by Raqs, that considers energy, exhaustion, incandescence and acts of witnessing the twentieth century. Installation View: Hungry for Time: an invitation to epistemic disobedience with Raqs Media Collective, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, 2021



"To People", 13 woven tapestries, 2019

Installation view: 'Still More World: Raqs Media Collective', Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, 2019  
Image courtesy: Raqs



"TAS (Temporary Autonomous Sarai)", architectural form of a work-space, relaxation venue, cinema and social space designed by Raqs Media Collective with Atelier Bowwow, 2005. The title 'TAS/ Temporary Autonomous Sarai' riffs off the idea of 'TAZ-Temporary Autonomous Zone' popularized by Hakim Bey and miscegenates it with 'Sarai' as conceived by Raqs. The TAS was a prototype for a contingent, portable iteration of the Sarai form.

Installation view from 'How Latitudes become Form', curated by Steve Dietz, Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis, 2003

# ALL, HUMANS

74) In your newest project "All, Humans", a permanent installation at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany, your audience are the students on the campus. Rather than in a compressed moment, your installation will be viewed in repeated compressed moments. How did you approach this different initial situation? Could you describe the work in more detail and tell us how you came up with the idea, what brought you to the work, how does this work relate to previous works of yours? How does the installation specifically relate to the site, a university campus? Can you tell us about the research you did for this work?

When a work is in the public realm for a long duration, a certain kind of permanence accrues around it. In a university context, successive cohorts of students encounter the work anew. Subsequent to a first encounter, it becomes a threshold question—not to retreat to a backdrop, and not to demand perpetual attention. It is so too with language, which is present in consciousness as salt dissolved in water. However, its cadences, intimacies, scales—all of these appear with different turns of phrase and intonation. Think of it this way: a work in a public realm is also a canopy—it acts as an intermittent and compressed place where people, often strangers, meet face to face, have conversations, and reflect on how moments can turn into 'incidents' and how incidents themselves can turn anything—from a heartbeat to an insurrection—into a thickening of lived time. It is where associative life gathers and finds new points of ignition.

The work comes from our own exploration of language, its structure, phonetic and semantic character, shape and scope, stutter and virality, its polysemic meanings, and also systems of encoding and relay. Humans, all humans, are uniquely linguistic in their sentience. The structure of the work comes from the Vai syllabary, and the

work consists of a series of sculptures that work with light and electronic signals to express variations of the phrase ‘all human beings’—*𞈀𞈁𞈂 𞈃𞈄*—in the Vai Language. The phrase is in the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified in 1948, ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.’

The Vai language, like many languages in traditional societies, persisted for many centuries without an alphabet, entirely orally, amongst the Mande people of Liberia and Sierra Leone in West Africa. The speakers of Vai were conversant with Arabic in both its spoken and written form; they used Arabic letters to write and keep records. In 1833, Mómòlu Duwalu Bukèlè, who, it is said worked as a deck hand on a Portuguese slave ship in the early nineteenth century, began working with his friends to systematize a writing system, a syllabary, for his language, Vai. The script had been revealed to him in a dream. It did not take long for the script to take hold, and very soon, it was being used in a variety of contexts, for religious purposes, for grave inscriptions, for poetry, and for mundane purposes like the drawing up of shopping lists in Liberia and in neighboring Sierra Leone, both territories carved out for the settlement of ‘returned’ and ‘liberated’ slaves under American (for Liberia) and British (for Sierra Leone) auspices.

It is not unlikely that a substantial number of the people who rapidly learnt and began to use the Vai writing system were former slaves. It is also possible that early contact with Native American Cherokee traders, who accompanied former slaves from the Americas to Liberia, may have had a part to play in the evolution of the Vai syllabary, especially since the Cherokee people had themselves invented for themselves their own writing system not long before. The invention of the Vai syllabary, then, offers us an insight into the consequences of contact between two peoples, both of whom were marginalized in the process of colonization. The Vai script was also deployed by American abolitionists as an intellectual attainment of African communities, and an ethical argument against the institution of slavery. These itineraries of contact and making contain a cosmopolitanism far from the discursive staging of modernity. Itineraries generating knowledge away from dominant circuits have been a concern for us.

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This search was the impulse with which we evoked Sarai, a gathering of itineraries, in 2000, with many associates.

In 1849, a German missionary and philologist called Sigismund Koelle, author of the catalogue of African languages titled “Polyglotta Africana”, visited Bukel and documented the process of the regularization of the Vai script. Since then, linguists have had an almost year-by-year window into the evolution of the Vai writing system, which leads them to believe that the evolution of the Vai syllabary gives us an insight into the ways in which written language per se evolved.

That is why we think this work occupies significance in a building devoted to the study of philology and language. The work is present in three locations in the building of the School, three different kinds of congregation, attention, and movement—lobby, locker, and library. An attention to the material form of language is a concern of the work, the shape and geometry of individual characters that make up a language, the history of language, in its written form, as a creative unfolding of geometric shapes and signs.

There is yet another sub-plot, another sub-story. In the deliberation of the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights after World War II, the Holocaust, and the destruction of Hiroshima, there were various debates that took place as men and women, from different cultures and differing political traditions and incompatible histories, tried to grapple with the task of forging, for the first time in human history, a set of norms and aspirations that addressed the entire human species and set limits to sovereign power. The phrase ‘all humans’ was included in the final draft of the text of Article 1 of the UDHR in place of the more conventional ‘all men’ at the insistence of a delegate from India, the feminist Hansa Mehta. This shift in phrasing to ‘all humans’ is indicative of the power that words have to alter huge swathes of meaning.

The work is made with hard LED modules with variable pixel pitch to create the body of the sculptures, and malleable LED as a folding flow like a canopy. The canopy is a disposition, a practice of gathering—in joy, togetherness, celebration, and anger—that the world has witnessed and is witnessing in varying intensities over the last

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decade. It finds its form from tent canopies, *shamiyanas*, that mark places like Delhi as shelters to gather under.

**75) The title ‘All, Humans’ refers to the largest possible audience, or rather involves all of us humans. Do you explicitly address what we humans have in common in this installation, do you as a collective foreground the collaborative, or even a utopian thought?**

The title “All, Humans” remains deliberately open ended. It is not clear at first whether this is a statement, or an exhortation, or both. Is it to include all humans under the category ‘all humans’, or to emphasize what sets all humans apart from other forms of sentience? These are all questions we want to work with, to play with, and to run with.

All humans, the crowd of crowds, are made up of single human beings, eight billion and more. And probably for the first time in human history we are aware of our ‘species’ being, our connected collectivity, in a material way. We are gingerly alert to how our species has changed the planet, and how in turn the planet affects us as a species. Everything about us, singly, and together, is changing. This work is cognizant of change, and asks for a different porosity and plasticity, an adaptability that takes ‘all’, an embracing quality, seriously. Is there something ‘utopian’ in this insistence? Maybe, maybe not.

# FABULATIONS

**76) Can you describe the role of fabulation in your approach as a collective? And give examples from your current projects like “The Laughter of Tears” at Kunstverein Braunschweig?**

**77) Is fabulation a way to broaden the range of perspectives that participate in the collective production of knowledge?**

In fabulism we access capabilities in ourselves that lie dormant within a normalized, transactional interlocutory range. It makes it possible to be infra-human and extra-human, and to course frequencies outside the auditory and cognitive spectrum of the here and now, expanding the perimeter of the self and the circumference of knowledge. In *‘The Laughter of Tears’* we speak in gestures, towards not-yet-made jokes, and when we speak—in fragments of stories—it is not only in human voices. Working in a fabulist register allows us to engage with creatures that have found in humans (us) their amanuenses. An owl and a donkey interpolate themselves, indicating the simultaneity of leaving and returning. Tyl Eulenspiegel of Braunschweig teaches us the trick of being on both sides of a mirror at once, reflected and reflecting, and Mulla Nasreddin of Akşehir, riding on a gentle, fearless donkey, shows us how to face the future backwards. These are of course only our most recent encounters over tales perhaps-told.

We delight in telling stories, from the remembrances of unbelievable yarns spun by grandmothers, from gossip in the grocery store, from missing person reports in the newspaper and the re-readings of epics, from granular anecdotes of political life, to stories hidden or revealed by statistics. Stories, fables, metaphors, riddles, jokes: all of these offer condensed vehicles for the travel of ideas and concepts. They have an economy and virality. The world is a movement of forces, invisible and subterranean, intimate and uncanny. Fabulism gives us ways for accessing the presence and traversal of these forces through the planet, the world, and us.

In *K D Vyas Correspondence Vol 1* (2006) we found ourselves following in a convoluted trail of signals from an immortal who wrote the *Mahabharata*, pestering us with letters with enigmatic titles. These letters were images or were clues to images. They seemed to be connected—like a hypertext world—via knotted stories, and were about a time that, to him, to Krishna Dwayapan Vyas, is a post-apocalyptic, declining time. We are still processing the import of his signals.

With Donna Haraway and Ursula K Le Guin, thinking with technology was brought into an affinity with the fabulist in a remarkable way. In the 90s, science fiction freed us into the inhabitation of many worlds within worlds. It spoke in the language of reason, drew in sciences and technological speculations, fears and mysteries, but also accessed the glossolalia of the fabulous.

We also read poems by Buddhist nuns, and the mid-18th century erotic poetry of Muddupalani, in a feminist compilation of women's writing covering 2500 years. The world of resonating companions only ever grows.

Parables and fables illustrate or embody ethical or philosophical dilemmas, and they often include animals and common folk, adopt a demotic idiom and suggest enlightenment has a universal potentiality. In the Jataka Tales, a Buddhist narrative form that we reference a monkey, a bird, an artisan, a washer-woman, each of these can be a Buddha. To us, so can a waiting bicycle, a modest lake, a confused helicopter, and the shadow of an elephant.

## 78) What you are thinking about utopia and dystopia?

In *'The Capital of Accumulation'* (2010), a work following the specter of Rosa Luxemburg, there is a moment when an off-screen voice ruminates—

'We are all numbers today. A datum, a statistic, a measure.  
How many are we? How much of ourselves are we?  
How deficient or how much in excess are we? How liquid, how solvent, how current? How prolific?  
How dense, deep and dubious are we? What are we

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worth? How much do we weigh in with the world? What discount do we offer on ourselves? What is our rank, the percentage of our takings? How high is our perch, how deep our abyss, how shallow our grave?'

This—self-doubt in a face-off with the vaporizing force of computational capitalist accumulation enveloping the globe—presents an intriguing scenario of a heightened self-awareness towards a worldly dissolution. As values topple, inequalities soar, and assurances fall like dominos, a feeling of being trapped inside a stasis, like a loop of two motorcycles dancing in a *maut ka kuan* (well of death), is understandable. In a 2007 piece, we called this loop *Investment%Insurance*. Sometimes it is good to accept that the world could merely be a fairground that has gone automated and awry.

Loss of control and the listings of opulence go hand in hand. It will be fair to accept that the inhabitation of knowledge, techne, and wealth has lost touch with its imposing footprints on life, and over this planet. It needs a radical overturning and dismantling. The question is, where will these ideas, experiments, and practices come from?

We weave pixels into carpets to talk about what it is *'To People'* (2019). Addressing the 'people' is an act of calling in—to invite and to gather—and then the act of populating a field begins. New people are always in the making. Working on an image in an early work of ours, a poster for *'Utopia Station'* in 2003, we wrote a short text. We recall it in the light of your query—

'Subliminal, submerged sounds demand attention. Lucid dreams awaken dormant possibilities. Rarely asked questions surprise. New rhythms play on nascent frequencies. All signals transmit and receive. Utopia is a record of the conversations that the world has with itself, out of earshot. Utopia is a hearing aid. Use it.'

The possibility of many vivid worlds is actually always latent within the materiality of this one. One has to listen to the sounds of it stirring to make it manifest. This could come from a hermeneutics of listening. Of paying attention to the things that are being said in whispers, or in forms of disguised and coded speech, or in acts

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of parrhesic, fearless speech. Azra Tabassum, then a young writer, in a discussion in LNJP, CM Lab, some time in 2005, brought into view what she termed *bina dare sunna*, fearless listening, as a foundation on which a culture of fearless speech can take shape. To her, the challenge is one of tuning in to a daring of listening that can hold pain, fear, anguish, blasphemy, abuse, scolding, joy, opposition, and loudness. Listening is a threshold space, always in a moment of breakdown and re-creation.

We reach back to eavesdrop across six hundred years and hear the artisan-mystic Ravidas sing about a place with no sorrow, no ownership, no terror, no torture, no taxes. He declared his freedom from the shackles of caste hierarchy to utter this radiant egalitarian heresy. In 2021, farmers in a yearlong protest-encampment at the Delhi border sang the songs of the land of no sorrows. It is 'Pamphilos' at work again. All are equal, each has primacy, and all roam through the palatial halls of bliss—which everyone inhabits as companion, of one another and of the planet.

The intimation of a rupture and an invitation to a beginning come together. Time and again, the moment of beginning with a call to a *new time* arrives. This arrival today has to be vast, with a circumference that is porous, open-ended at the edges. It has to encompass oceans, forests, cities, waste, animals, tools, codes, protocols, homo sapiens, and machines. It has to map complex navigational diagrams that chart paths and currents between an expanding archipelago of many selves, many kinds of selves, the cosmos, and consciousness.

In 'Strikes at Time' (2011), as the camera watches a luminous vehicle move through a twilight landscape the writer—a figuration, someone in between Heeraprasad—a daily wager in Delhi of the 90s, Gauny—a proletariat in mid 19th century Paris out of Jacques Rancière's *Nights of Labour*, and ten young working-class writers in the contested world of 2010 Delhi—writes, "I fought sleep all night. Intoxication is an inner reality. One must stop dreaming those dreams that have an a priori existence in the world. Left home at noon. I no longer have faith in time."

# ENDNOTES

*The annotations are to the phrases in the text of the interview that are tagged here within < and > signs. Raqs Media Collective is abbreviated as Raqs.*

## <SENSATION OF THOUGHT>

*An interview of Raqs Media Collective by Chloé Nicolet-dit-Félix and Gulru Vardar on the "Sarai Reader 09" exhibition, published in 'On Curating' (Issue 19, On Artistic and Curatorial Authorship)*

<https://www.on-curating.org/issue-19-reader/interview-with-raqs-media-collective-on-the-exhibition-sarai-reader-09.html>

## <SARAI, AND WE, BECAME PART OF THIS PROBING AND THINKING>

*'Space is a Doubt': We are never out of place, wherever we may be. Interview with Raqs Media Collective by Silvia Calvarese in 'Roots & Routes: Research on Visual Cultures'*

<https://www.roots-routes.org/space-is-a-doubtraqsdi-silvia-calvarese/>

For a report on the Opening of Sarai in February, 2001 by Geert Lovink, see,

<https://networkcultures.org/geertlovink-archive/texts/report-of-the-opening-of-sarai/>

## <DOCUMENTA 11>

The first public discussion of the-then forthcoming Documenta 11, based on an encounter with its 'Delhi Platform', took place on an online discussion list (list serv) 'The Sarai Reader List' which was hosted on the Sarai website.

The first post that initiated this discussion was uploaded by one of the members of the Raqs Media Collective on the 16th of May, 2001

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/reader-list/reader-list.mail.sarai.net/2001-May/000069.html>

Okwui Enwezor, artistic director of Documenta 11, intervened in this discussion with a post on the 30th of May, 2001

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/reader-list/reader-list.mail.sarai.net/2001-May/000115.html>

## <DISCUSSION LISTS ON MEDIA AND URBAN EXPERIENCE>

The entire archives (2001 onwards) of the Sarai Reader List are online at

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/reader-list/reader-list.mail.sarai.net/>

## <...YOUNG PEOPLE IN A CONTESTED NEIGHBOUR- HOOD IN DELHI>

To know more about the Sarai Media labs (with Ankur) in working class neighborhoods in Delhi, see 'Cybermohalla'

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<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/category/infra-practices/cybermohalla-ensemble/>

## <KINETIC CONTEMPLATION>

Listen to Raqs talk about what they mean by 'Kinetic Contemplation' at

<https://www.youtube.com/live/7FL5MOmKGec?si=oBbz08F-QiQOAHKrI>

For more on the formation and early years of Raqs, see *Raqs Media Collective: The Talking Cure*, by HG Masters, Art Asia Pacific, August 23, 2016.

<https://artasiapacific.com/issue/raqs-media-collective-talking-cure?locale=en>

For a note on 'kinetic contemplation' as understood by Raqs, see <https://www.architecturaldigest.in/magazine-story/making-december-art-issue-cover-raqs/>

## <FRIENDSHIP>

For a Raqs meditation on Friendship, see *Yours Sincerely* by Raqs, published in "Half Life", e-flux Journal, December 2022 <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/half-life/507088/yours-sincerely/>

See the Yokohama Triennale *Sourcebook* by Raqs where they invoke Svetlana Boym's 'luminosity of friendship'. *Sourcebook*, Yokohama Triennale 2020. Published November, 2019

<https://www.yokohamatriennale.jp/english/2020/concept/source/introduction/>

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## <MODERN/MODERNITY>

See *Off Modern: A Conversation between Raqs Media Collective and Moinak Biswas*, published in "Humanities Underground", August 6, 2011  
<https://humanitiesunderground.org/off-modern-a-conversation-with-raqs/>

## <PAMPHILOS>

On *Pamphilos* and the *Pamphilos Conversations*:

*Pamphilos*  
<https://www.onassis.org/whats-on/fast-forward-festival-6/fff6-pamphilos>

*The Pamphilos Conversations*  
<https://www.onassis.org/whats-on/fast-forward-festival-6/fff6-pamphilos/fff6-pamphilos-conversations>

## <DEEP SEA>

For Raqs' notes on what they call 'the submarine horizon' *We are Here, But is it Now?: The Submarine Horizons of Contemporaneity* by Raqs Media Collective. This monograph was part of "The Contemporary Condition", a series edited by Geoff Cox & Jacob Lund, published by Sternberg Press (2017) in partnership with ARoS Aarhus Art Museum.

For thoughts by Raqs on being submariners, *Raqs Media Collective in Conversation with Srinivas Aditya Mopidevi*, Ocula Magazine, 11th November, 2016  
[https://ocula.com/magazine/conversations/raqs-media-collective-\(1\)/](https://ocula.com/magazine/conversations/raqs-media-collective-(1)/)

## <COLLECTIVE PRACTICE>

For an essay by Raqs on the differences between collectives and collectivity, *Additions, Subtractions: On Collectives and Collectivities* by Raqs Media Collective, Manifesta Journal #8, 2009

and for an essay about Raqs as a collective, see,

*How to be a Collective in the Age of the Consumer Sovereign: The Art of the Raqs Media Collective*, by Pamela M. Lee, Artforum, October 2009  
<https://www.artforum.com/print/200908/how-to-be-a-collective-in-the-age-of-the-consumer-sovereign-the-art-of-raqs-media-collective-23742>

## <PRACTICE>

For Raqs' notes on what 'practice' means for them, see, "X Notes on Practice: Stubborn Structures and Insistent Seepage in a Networked World" by Raqs Media Collective  
[http://xenopraxis.net/readings/Raqs\\_Xnotesonpractice.pdf](http://xenopraxis.net/readings/Raqs_Xnotesonpractice.pdf)

## <MANIFESTO>

For an intervention on the Manifesto form through an inversion, see *Fragments from a Communist Latento*, "Practices, Power & The Public Sphere", Mayday Magazine, Issue 2, Winter 2010.  
<https://maydaymagazine.com/communist-latento-installation-and-text-based-work-from-raqs-media-collective/>



## <BOOKS — READING>

For a Raqs take on the act of reading, see 'The Robin Hood of Wisdom: An Act of Reading', on YouTube [https://youtu.be/KfAOCZ7GQ1c?si=kjA4n12C\\_oSoFR\\_v](https://youtu.be/KfAOCZ7GQ1c?si=kjA4n12C_oSoFR_v)

also, see, 'Read by, Written by' edited by Raqs Media Collective and Theodor Ringborg, Art & Theory Publishing, 2017 Read By, Written By is a book of poetry, published to accompany the 2017 Bonniers Konsthall exhibition "The Image of War". In a kind of poetic relay, the editors contacted people from around the world to 'read' a poem and share it ahead. <https://artandtheory.org/products/read-by-written-by>

## <RHINOCEROS>

For the abiding presence of a runaway rhinoceros in Raqs' thought and work, see 'However Incongruous' <https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2007/03/16/however-incongruous/>

## <ROBOTS>

Raqs reflect on Robots and other beings in a 'mini-manga' with illustrations by Freddy Carrasco in *Workers and Robots Enter a Factory Canteen*, published in e-flux Journal, issue #95, November 2018. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/95/228046/workers-and-robots-enter-a-factory-canteen/>

## <YAKSHA & YAKSHI>

For Raqs' exchanges with various *Yaksha and Yakshi*, see, 'Yaksha Prashna: The Riverbank Episode', Raqs Media Collective, 2011 <https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Yaksha-Prashna-The-Riverbank-Episode-2010.pdf>

## <CAPITAL OF ACCUMULATION>

For a note on the video diptych *The Capital of Accumulation*, see, <https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2010/01/18/the-capital-of-accumulation/> Vimeo Password: 2010\_cofa

for Cuauhtémoc Medina's essay on *The Capital of Accumulation* see, *A History of Infinity and Some Fresh Catastrophes: On Raqs Media Collective's The Capital of Accumulation* by Cuauhtémoc Medina, e-flux Journal, Issue #38, October 2012 <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/38/61220/a-history-of-infinity-and-some-fresh-catastrophes-on-raqs-media-collective-s-the-capital-of-accumulation/>

## <MONSOON>

For Raqs' reflections of the first rains of the monsoon, see *Wonderful Uncertainty* by Raqs Media Collective, published in "Curating and the Educational Turn", edited by Paul O'Neill & Mick Wilson, Open Editions/De Appel, 2010 <https://betonsalon.net/PDF/essai.pdf>

## <HUNGRY FOR TIME>

For the exhibition curated by Raqs Media Collective at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, see, *Hungry for Time. An invitation to epistemic disobedience* with Raqs Media Collective  
<https://www.akbild.ac.at/en/museum-and-exhibitions/art-collections/current/paintingsgallery/exhibitions/2021/hungry-for-time>

For the publication that accompanies this exhibition, see, <https://spectorbooks.com/book/raqs-media-collective-hungry-for-time-en>

For an interview by Srinivas Aditya Mopidevi with Raqs Media Collective on *Hungry for Time* in *Stir World*, see, <https://www.stirworld.com/see-features-raqs-media-collective-s-recent-exhibition-in-vienna-speaks-against-hunger-for-time>

## <BUILDING SIGHT>

For the exhibition concept note of *Building Sight* by Raqs Media Collective within “On Difference #2” at Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, see, [https://www.wkv-stuttgart.de/uploads/media/raqs\\_04.pdf](https://www.wkv-stuttgart.de/uploads/media/raqs_04.pdf)

## <SARAI READERS>

The e-book of every Sarai Reader (from 01 to 09) can be freely accessed at:  
<https://sarai.net/category/publications/sarai-reader/>  
<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/?s=sarai>

## <ECOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY OF LIFE AND IMAGINATION>

*Salt* by Raqs Media Collective in “The Drama Review” Volume 65 Issue 4, 2021  
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-drama-review/article/abs/salt/8F37B34E13950C97D2BC870FE94C6D51>

*Three and a Half Conversations with an Eccentric Planet* by Raqs Media Collective  
Third Text, Volume 27, 2013, Issue 1: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09528822.2013.752233>

## <WHY NOT ASK AGAIN>

*Eleven Notes for the Eleventh Shanghai Biennale*, Raqs Media Collective, Blueprint, 11th Shanghai Biennale, Power Station of Art, Shanghai, 2016.

For a review of *Why Not Ask Again*, see text by Xin Wang, in *e-flux Criticism*, November 15, 2016  
<https://www.e-flux.com/criticism/239433/11th-shanghai-biennale-why-not-ask-again>

## <FILM HISTORY IN INDIA FROM THE EARLY 1970S>

For Raqs elaborating on how film history from the early 1970s informed their curatorial concept for the Shanghai Biennale, see *Parallel Universe*, by

Phalguni Desai, an article on Raqs Media Collective's curation of the Shanghai Biennale, October 2016 edition of Elle India.  
<https://www.magzter.com/ja/stories/Fashion/Elle-India/Parallel-Universe>

For observations by Raqs on the film *Jukti, Takko aar Gappo* ('Arguments, Reasons and Stories') by Ritwik Ghatak, and on a Chinese Science fiction trilogy by Cixin Liu, see *Sources, Itineraries and the Making of a Thicket*, by Raqs Media Collective, "On Curating" Journal, Issue 35, Decolonizing Art Institutions, December 2017  
<https://www.on-curating.org/issue-35-reader/sources-itineraries-and-the-making-of-a-thicket.html>

## <...A CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE FICTION BOOK FROM CHINA>

For details of Cixin Liu's Science Fiction trilogy 'Three Body Problem', see the Wikipedia entry on the novel at  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Three-Body\\_Problem\\_\(novel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Three-Body_Problem_(novel))

See, also, a perceptive essay by Jiayang Fan: *Liu Cixin's War of the Worlds*, New Yorker, June 17, 2019  
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/06/24/liu-cixins-war-of-the-worlds>

## <AFTERGLOW>

For the concept, by Raqs Media Collective, of *Afterglow: The Yokohama Triennale 2020*, see,  
<https://www.yokohamatriennale.jp/english/2020/concept/>

Yokohama Triennale 2020: *Not an end, an Afterglow*  
<https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/345901/yokohama-triennale-2020not-an-end-an-afterglow/>

For a review of the 7th Yokohama Triennale, "Afterglow" by Koichiro Osaka  
<https://www.e-flux.com/criticism/346966/7th-yokohama-triennale-afterglow>

## <SOURCEBOOK OF 'AFTERGLOW', YOKOHAMA TRIENNALE, 2020, CURATED BY RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE>

To download the *Sourcebook* - the publication anticipating and accompanying *Afterglow*  
<https://www.yokohamatriennale.jp/english/2020/concept/source/>

## <DISCURSIVE JUSTICE ENSEMBLE>

For more on the ideas behind the Discursive Justice Ensemble, see the announcement for a 'Deliberation on Discursive Justice, The 'Episodo' Series', e-flux Announcements, March 4, 2020  
<https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/314534/deliberation-on-discursive-justice-the-episodo-series/>

To read about all the Episodo by the Discursive Justice Ensemble in 2020,  
<https://www.yokohamatriennale.jp/english/2020/concept/discursivejustice/>

## <...INFRA-PROCEDURES OF LIVING>

See section on 'Infra Practices' on the Raqs website, which describes them as "practice folds within other practices, that develops a stream that is in conversation, yet keeps moving with its own momentum..."

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/category/infra-practices/>

## <SEEPAGE>

'Seepage', an anthology of early essays by Raqs Media Collective, Sternberg Press, 2010

<https://mitpress.mit.edu/9781933128863/seepage/>  
[https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Raqs\\_SEEPAGE.pdf](https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Raqs_SEEPAGE.pdf)

## <UNTOLD INTIMACY OF DIGITS>

*Untold Intimacy of Digits* (2011)

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2011/10/25/the-untold-intimacy-of-digits/>

See, for more on UID: *Artist of the Week 182: Raqs Media Collective*, by Skye Sherwin, March 22, 2012

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2012/mar/22/artist-week-raqs-media-collective>

And to see a version of this work, uploaded on YouTube,

<https://youtu.be/B8G3XRqF3WI?si=1gXfhBbDYtV5spra>

## <ESCAPEMENT>

*Escapement* (2009)

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2009/08/16/escapement/>

On *Escapement* as part of the exhibition 'Global Contemporary: Art Worlds After 1989' curated by Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg at ZKM

<http://www.global-contemporary.de/en/artists/23-raqs-media-collective>

## <PROVISIONS FOR EVERYBODY>

*Provisions for Everybody* (2018)

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2018/08/10/provisions-for-everybody-film/>

Password for Vimeo Link on this page: 2018\_provisions

An interview in which there is a detailed discussion on *Provisions for Everybody*:

*Sideways in Time: Raqs Media Collective Talks with Erica Levin*, Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University

<https://wexarts.org/read-watch-listen/sideways-time-part-1-raqs-media-collective-talks-erica-levin>

## <BLOOD OF STARS>

*The Blood of Stars* (2017)

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2017/08/15/the-blood-of-stars/>

Password for Vimeo Link on this page: 2017\_stars

## <HARD TACK BISCUIT>

*Communard Biscuits* (2017)

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2017/04/05/communard-biscuits/>

Raqs Media Collective write about why they baked a mound of edible 3D replicas of a biscuit from the Paris Commune, found in the People History Museum of Manchester in 2017: *An Oscillation Between 2000 Years After and 1000 Years Before*, Frieze, December, 2017

<https://www.frieze.com/article/2017-oscillation-between-2000-years-after-and-1000-years>

## <GAUTAMA BUDDHA>

Raqs' engagement with the philosophical legacy of the Buddha is sporadic but not insignificant.

For a consideration on how a reworking of Jataka Tales (Birth Stories of the Buddha) enters Raqs' work see, *Unfamiliar Tales*, on the Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary website

<https://tba21.org/unfamiliar-tales-2008>

See, also, an interview with Raqs Media Collective by Saba Gulraiz in *Art News and Views*, April 2011

<https://www.artnewsnviews.in/view-article.php?article=a-conversation-with-raqs-media-collective&iid=19&articleid=458>

There is a discussion of the Kalama Sutta (Discourse on Doubt by the Buddha to the Kalamas), as featured in *Provisions for Everybody* in 'Sideways in Time: Raqs Media Collective Talks with Erica Levin', Wexner Center for the Arts, Ohio State University

<https://wexarts.org/read-watch-listen/sideways-time-part-1-raqs-media-collective-talks-erica-levin>

## <UNTIMELY CALENDAR>

'Asamayavali'/'Untimely Calendar' was the title of a 'prospective' exhibition of the work of Raqs Media Collective that was held at the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, in 2014.

*Footnotes from the Untimely Calendar Exhibition by Raqs Media Collective* by Srinivas Aditya Mopidevi, 2015

[https://www.academia.edu/25965398/Footnotes\\_from\\_the\\_Untimely\\_Calendar\\_exhibition\\_by\\_Raqs\\_Media\\_Collective](https://www.academia.edu/25965398/Footnotes_from_the_Untimely_Calendar_exhibition_by_Raqs_Media_Collective)

A virtual tour of the *Untimely Calendar* exhibition on the website of the National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi,

<http://ngmaindia.gov.in/virtual-gallery-asamayavali-untimely-calendar.asp>

For the publication *With an Untimely Calendar* accompanying this exhibition, edited by Shveta Sarada, see,

<https://www.exoticindiaart.com/book/details/with-untimely-calendar-raqs-media-collective-uah406/>

## <GLISSANT'S 'MONDIALITÉ'>

For a note on *Presentomorrow*, Raqs' contribution to 'Mondialité' an exhibition curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Asad Raza that looked at the legacy of Edouard Glissant, see

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2017/03/16/presetomorrow/>

Password to both Vimeo links on this page: Raqs\_presentomorrow

For more on 'Mondialité, or the Archipelagos of Edouard Glissant' at the Villa Empain, Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, 2017, see, [https://www.villaempain.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Mondialite%CC%81\\_Booklet.pdf](https://www.villaempain.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Mondialite%CC%81_Booklet.pdf)

For a note by Raqs on Edouard Glissant, among other things, see, *Freeing the Weight of the Habitual*

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/The-Weight-of-the-Habitual-Raqs.pdf>

## <FIVE MILLION INCIDENTS>

Five Million Incidents was an 'occupation of time' at the Goethe Institut, Delhi and Kolkata, catalysed by the Raqs Media Collective in partnership with the Cultural Programming Department of Goethe Institut (Max Mueller Bhavan) Delhi & Kolkata, and a curatorial collegium.

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2020/11/05/five-million-incidents/>  
<https://www.goethe.de/ins/in/en/kul/art/fmi/afm.html>

And for a post-note on the entire process, see <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/363511/five-million-incidents/>

## <CONTESTED COMMONS, TRESPASSING PUBLICS>

*Contested Commons, Trespassing Publics – A Public Record* was the title of an international conference on Intellectual Property and its discontents, hosted by Sarai/CSDS and the Alternative Law Forum. Members of the Raqs Media Collective designed and hosted this conference.

Download its proceedings at <https://sarai.net/contested-commons-trespassing-publics/>

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## <SARAI READER 09: THE EXHIBITION>

*Sarai Reader 09* was the title of the last Sarai Reader publication as well as of an eponymous proposition-based and evolving exhibition at the Devi Art Foundation, Gurugram, curated by Raqs Media Collective in 2012–2013

<https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/33853/sarai-reader-09-the-exhibition/>

## <INTERVIEW WITH KK MAHAJAN, CINEMATOGRAPHER>

Raqs' interview with KK Mahajan, a very significant cinematographer working within the parallel cinema in India was part of a 4 years long research project (1997 to 2000, with the cinematographer C K Muraleedharan) on the history and practice of cinematography in India.

A transcript of the interview is available at [https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/kk\\_mahajan.pdf](https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/kk_mahajan.pdf)

## <HISTORY AND PRACTICE OF CINEMATOGRAPHY IN INDIA>

The transcripts of all the interviews of this research and archival project (with support from the India Foundation for the Arts) are available at

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2001/11/17/the-history-practice-of-cinematography-in-india/>

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## <RE-RUN>

*Re-Run* (2013)

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2018/03/02/re-run/>

Password for Vimeo Link on this page: 2013\_rerun

## <THE SURFACE OF EACH DAY IS A DIFFERENT PLANET>

*The Surface of Each Day is a Different Planet* (2009)

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2009/10/26/the-surface-of-each-day-is-a-different-planet/>

Password for Vimeo Link on this page: aboutit\_surface

## <NOT YET AT EASE>

*Not Yet At Ease* was an immersive installation and program of reflections, first presented at Firstsite in Colchester. This was a largescale commission by 14-18 Now: Centenary Art Commissions commemorating World War I. The installation engaged with the presence of soldiers (and others) from the Indian subcontinent in the battlefields of the First World War.

<https://www.1418now.org.uk/commissions/not-yet-ease/>

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2018/08/10/not-yet-at-ease/>

## <ASANKH>

*Asankh* (2014)

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2015/12/06/asankh-countless/>

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For a reflection by Raqs on the idea of 'asankh', glossed as 'countlessness' or 'infinite', see *On Triangles, Infinity and Learning Where to Stop*, an interview with Raqs Media Collective by Himali Singh Soin, Fuschia Tree, Issue 16, January 2013] <http://www.thefuschiatree.com/307/fullview>

## <A WORK IN A PUBLIC REALM IS ALSO A CANOPY>

A discussion on this at *Permanence/Impermanence: The Life of Public Art*, Interview with Raqs Media Collective by AGYU (Jenifer Pappararo), April 7, 2023

<https://agyu.art/project/raqs-uncontainable-collections-2023/>

## <VAI LANGUAGE>

For the evolution of the script of the Vai language, see 'What the Vai Script Reveals About the Evolution of Writing' by Piers Kelly, a linguistic anthropologist, in *Sapiens Magazine*, May 2022

<https://www.sapiens.org/language/vai-script-evolution/>

## <UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS>

For an article by article study of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, see

Article by Article: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights for a New Generation (Pennsylvania Studies in Human Rights) by Johannes Morsink, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021

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## <HANSA MEHTA>

For details about Hansa Mehta's contribution to the change in the language of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, see 'Women Who Shaped the Declaration' in 'Drafters of the Declaration' on the United Nations website.

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/udhr/drafters-of-the-declaration>

## <THE LAUGHTER OF TEARS>

Raqs' solo exhibition *The Laughter of Tears* at the Kunstverein Braunschweig, September – November 2021

<https://kunstvereinbraunschweig.de/en/exhibitions/raqs-media-collective/>

## <KD VYAS CORRESPONDENCE: VOL 1>

*KD Vyas Correspondence: Vol.1* (2006)

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2006/08/14/the-k-d-vyas-correspondence/>

For details of the publication *A Dossier Concerning the KD Vyas Correspondence: Vol. 1*, (with an essay by Cedric Vincent) accompanying the exhibition, see the entry on the publication at the Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong

<https://aaa.org.hk/en/collections/search/library/the-kd-vyas-correspondence-vol-1>

For a pdf of the publication published by Revolver Books for the Museum of Kommunikation, Frankfurt, 2006,

[https://www.academia.edu/4094134/A\\_DOSSIER\\_CONCERNING\\_THE\\_KD\\_VYAS\\_CORRESPONDENCE\\_VOL.1](https://www.academia.edu/4094134/A_DOSSIER_CONCERNING_THE_KD_VYAS_CORRESPONDENCE_VOL.1)  
<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2006/08/14/the-k-d-vyas-correspondence/>

## <FEARLESS SPEECH / FEARLESS LISTENING>

*Fearless Speech/Fearless Listening* by Cybermohalla Ensemble, in 'Cybermohalla Hub' (Pages 12-14), Co-edited by Nikolaus Hirsch and Shveta Sarada. Co-Published by Sarai-CSDS and Sternberg Press, 2012

[https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/CybermohohallaHub\\_w.Cover\\_compressed-2.pdf](https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/CybermohohallaHub_w.Cover_compressed-2.pdf)

## <HEAR THE ARTISAN-MYSTIC RAVIDAS SING ABOUT A PLACE WITH NO SORROW>

On Ravidas, and his conception of 'Begumpura', the 'place without sorrow', see *Raqs Media Collective Dreams of Equal Division of Toxicity*, published in 'Live Mint' Magazine, August, 2018

<https://lifestyle.livemint.com/news/talking-point/raqs-media-collective-dreams-of-equal-division-of-toxicity-111645244190719.html>



## <STRIKES AT TIME>

*Strikes at Time* (2011)

<https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/index.php/2011/04/05/strikes-at-time-2/>

Password for Vimeo Link on this page: aboutit\_strikes

*Invoking the Translator: A Conversation by Raqs Media Collective* by Avishek Ganguly, January, 2016, in 'Public Books'

<https://www.publicbooks.org/invoking-the-translator-a-conversation-with-raqs-media-collective/>

## <I NO LONGER HAVE FAITH IN TIME>

'I No Longer Have Faith in Time' is a statement by Louis Gabriel Gauny, the 19th century French proletarian philosopher-carpenter in his diary, recovered by the philosopher Jacques Ranciere in his book 'Proletarian Nights'/'Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream In Nineteenth Century France'.

It is mirrored in a diary entry by Heeraprasad, a worker in Delhi in the 1990s. This diary was found and *written into* by the young proletarian writers in Delhi calling themselves Cybermohalla Ensemble, as they read the Hindi translation of *The Nights of Labour*, published in 2010 (tr. Abhay Dube from the English language version). Published by Vani Prakashan, New Delhi. 'The Diarist' by Cybermohalla Ensemble, in "Cybermohalla Hub" (Pages 64–71), Co-edited by Nikolaus Hirsch and Shveta Sarda, Co-Published by Sarai-CSDS and Sternberg Press, 2012

See also, 'I No Longer Have Faith in Time' by Jacques Ranciere, in "Cybermohalla Hub" (Pages 76–81), Co-edited by Nikolaus Hirsch and Shveta Sarda, Co-Published by Sarai-CSDS and Sternberg Press, 2012

[https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/CybermohohallaHub\\_w\\_Cover\\_compressed-2.pdf](https://works.raqsmediacollective.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/CybermohohallaHub_w_Cover_compressed-2.pdf)

# BIOS OF COLLECTIVE EYE AND RAQS RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE

Raqs Media Collective (\*1992, by Monica Narula, Jeebesh Bagchi and Shuddhabrata Sengupta). The word "raqs" in several languages denotes an intensification of awareness and presence attained by whirling, turning, being in a state of revolution. Raqs take this sense to mean 'kinetic contemplation' and a restless and energetic entanglement with the world, and with time. Raqs practices across several media; making installation, sculpture, video, performance, text, lexica, associative milieus, and curation.

Raqs enlist objects from various moments—a 2000 year old cup, a 300 year old automata, 150 year old biscuits, a billion year old meteorite—to turn them into objects to sniff and taste time. Their work finds them at the intersection of contemporary art, philosophical conjectures and historical speculations.

The members of Raqs Media Collective live and work in Delhi, India. In 2001, they co-founded the Sarai program at CSDS New Delhi and ran it for a decade, where they also edited the Sarai Reader series.

Raqs has exhibited widely, including at Documenta, the Venice, Istanbul, Taipei, Liverpool, Shanghai, Sydney and Sao Paulo Biennales. Some solo exhibitions (and projects) include “Pamphilos” at Fast Forward Festival 6, Athens (2019); “Still More World” at Mathaf Museum of Modern Art, Doha (2019); “Twilight Language” at Manchester Art Gallery (2017–2018); “Everything Else is Ordinary” at K21 Museum for 21st Century Art, Dusseldorf (2018); “If It’s Possible, It’s Possible”, MUAC, Mexico City (2015) and “Untimely Calendar” at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi (2014–2015). Exhibitions curated by Raqs include “In The Open or in Stealth” (MACBA, Barcelona 2018–2019); “Why Not Ask Again” (Shanghai Biennale 2016–2017); “INSERT2014” (New Delhi, 2014) and “The Rest of Now” & “Scenarios” (Manifesta 7, Bolzano, 2008). They were the Artistic Directors of the Yokohama Triennale 2020, “Afterglow”, and most recently they exhibited “The Laughter of Tears” at the Kunstverein Braunschweig (2021), “Hungry for Time” an invitation to epistemic disobedience with the collections of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (2021) and “1980 in Parallax” at the Cosmic House, London (ongoing 2023).

[www.raqsmediacollective.net](http://www.raqsmediacollective.net)

## THE COLLECTIVE EYE

The Collective Eye (TCE) aims to strengthen a polynational dialogue between different collectives as well as between collectives and theorists. TCE organizes exhibitions and symposia on collective practice in art and publishes the book series Thoughts on Collective Practice. The first volumes in the series discuss practices of collective action with the artist duo Elmgreen & Dragset, the collective Slavs and Tatars, originally founded as a reading group, the theater director Roberto Ciulli, and with the curatorial collective ruangrupa. TCE was initiated in 2012 in Montevideo during the exhibition In Search of Another Subjectivity on art collectives by Heinz-Norbert Jocks, Dominique Lucien Garaudel, Sebastián Alonso and Martin Craciun. Today, the core team include Emma Nilsson, Dominique Lucien Garaudel and Heinz-Norbert Jocks.

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[www.thecollectiveeye.org](http://www.thecollectiveeye.org)

**RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE,  
AN INTERVIEW 2021–2023 (BY) THE COLLECTIVE EYE**

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**“THE WORLD IS A  
MOVEMENT OF FORCES,  
INVISIBLE AND  
SUBTERRANEAN, INTIMATE  
AND UNCANNY.”**

**— RAQS**