

Video Vortex XI
Video in Flux: Art, Activism & Archives
23-25 February 2017
Hotel 18, Fort Kochi & Mill Hall, Mattancherry
As part of the **Sristi Outpost:**
A collateral of the Kochi-Muzeris biennial

Programme & Schedule

Thursday, 23 February 2017 @ Hotel 18, Fort Kochi

Registration: 9.00-10.00 am

Introduction to Video Vortex XI: 10.00-10.30

Geetha Narayanan (Founder-director, Srishti Institute of Art, Design & Technology);
Geert Lovink (Founder, Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam), Rashmi Sawhney
(Programme Director, Video Vortex XI)

Panel I: Software and the Politics of Collaboration: 10.30-11.30

Chair: Sharath Chandra Ram

Software and its Structuring of Interactive Documentary - Fabiola Hanna (Ph.D. Candidate in Film & Digital Media, University of California, Santa Cruz)

Synopsis: Without software, idocs would not exist, yet no critical evaluation of how software influences these documentaries exists! The fields of i-docs, media studies, software studies and computer science have largely ignored the very medium that constitutes these projects. In this paper, I argue that the claims attached to idocs, whether about participation, agency, authorship, cocreation, democracy, are ultimately curtailed if the medium, namely the software that houses and makes an idoc, is not addressed. Using my current in-progress work, *We Are History*, an idoc about the modern history of Lebanon, as a point of departure, I show that looking at the process of writing the software enables critical analysis of software's influence on the the idoc itself. In pursuit of generating communal dialogue in the context of inability to have conversations about our contested history in Lebanon, I set out to build an Artificial Agent that would sift through an oral history video archive of testimonies of daily life with the task of figuring out common threads, sometimes confirming and sometimes contesting each other, and automatically editing many different versions of possible histories. This automatic montage machine addresses two problems in the Lebanese context: first, it circumvents the tiring accusation of being biased since a machine is now the moderator (presenting a multiplicity of stories might be the closest one can get to strategic objectivity) and second, it opens up the possibility of conversation by weaving various and often opposing perspectives in order to start imagining what our histories could look like. The project, which would reside online as well as in booths in public spaces across Lebanon, invites people to listen to an automated montage of oral histories and to then share their own stories and memories. Each newly contributed story is instantly added to the archive, analyzed using new developments in computational corpus-based linguistics, automatic story generation,

and social computing and tagged with its transcript which enables the interface to incorporate newly added video interviews into the pool concerning the event discussed, thereby changing the version of history previously compiled. The paper concludes that both scholars of media and media-based practitioners need to pay attention to the critical effects of software in shaping i-docs, mainly in the context of activist video.

Co-creating with my viewing public - Anandana Kapur (Ph.D. Candidate, AJKMCR, Jamia Millia Islamia)

Synopsis: Creating a “collaborative” i-doc raises several aesthetic, technological and ethical questions: What is the relationship of the collaborator with the material and the digital landscape? What poetics can be alluded to the collaborative process such that the performative potential of the material is not undermined? How does one elevate the authorial intervention to be more than just compilation? An exegesis of an ongoing documentary that uses ‘situated technologies’ i.e. mobile phones as a means to enable women to document the city of Delhi, the proposed paper will examine how the ‘viewing publics’ of collaborative interactive works may be imagined. It will demonstrate how the enterprise of shared subjectivity begs several ethical considerations that account for the design and architecture of an interactive work. The process of creating an i-doc should entail cognizance of the digital inequalities that exist in our world because the extant technological-divide confronts claims to agency made by web-based i-docs. Dade-Robertson et al (2012) observe, “[w]eb based technologies are often placeless, designed to be “anytime and anywhere,” and do not reflect the local condition. Therefore, participatory design and the modes of interactivity employed need to extend beyond aesthetics to encompass experience. In addition, it is imperative that creators of interactive works recognise that the reduction of ‘directorial necessity’ is an opportunity to explore enhanced possibilities of hypermedial richness and depth, of including multiple voices and alternative points of view, feedback and participation.

Panel II: Samosa Breaks and Item Numbers – 11.30-12.30

Chair: Madhuja Mukherjee

Tactical VR: Representing the Intermission in Indian Cinema - Karl Mendonca (Ph.D. Candidate in Film and Digital Media, University of California, Santa Cruz)

Synopsis: While the intermission has long been phased out from cinemas in most parts of the world, the “samosa break” (as it is referred to in Bombay vernacular), is very much a routine experience for film audiences in India. For those unfamiliar with the concept, the mechanics are quite simple: about halfway through a film the house lights turn on and interstitial advertising is displayed on the cinema screen for 10-15 minutes while patrons stretch their legs and visit the concession stand. Apart from Lalitha Gopalan’s *Cinema of Interruptions* (2009), the intermission itself is an entirely under-theorized subject of critical inquiry in South Asian Cinema Studies. Further, in contrast to the significant body of work on Indian cinema that has focused on the textuality of film, there has been scarce theoretical attention paid to the material aspects of film production and distribution. This lacuna points to an opportunity for theoretical work, but also raises a significant challenge of connecting the broader logistical workings of

distribution with the regimes of signification signaled by media forms. As a working context, my praxis “follows the action” out of the cinema hall and present a case study of Blaze Advertising, a 70-year old network in India that held a monopoly on the distribution of cinema intermission advertising between the 1960’s and the 1980’s. The story takes an unexpected turn, when in 1986, Blaze Advertising’s monopoly was disrupted by the Government of India. Rather than continue to compete in cinema advertising, Blaze repurposed their network as a domestic courier company (similar to FedEx) with a franchise based business model that exponentially increased their presence across India. This paper will discuss the use of Virtual Reality (VR) to represent the contiguous but hidden spaces of the intermission spanning the production, distribution and exhibition of the advertising forms displayed on the screen. While touching on some of the challenges of working with a medium in its inchoate stages, the paper will focus on the development of an aesthetics of critical representation. Borrowing from the ethos of structural filmmaking, I propose a set of tactical heuristics for VR to undermine the affordance of immediacy and work towards Barthes’ notion of a text as “that which does not compute.”

YouTube Sleaze: Viral Mutations of Item Numbers - Silpa Mukherjee (Ph.D. Candidate in Cinema Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

Synopsis: Item numbers are special song and dance sequences in popular Bombay cinema which foreground the body as a vibrant and sexualized force. They initially derived their attraction of cinematic sleaze and deliberate use of trash aesthetics from the B movie but gradually made their way into big budget A circuit films. The contemporary media convergence has enabled the item numbers to have multiple screen lives. This is curiously enmeshed with the glamour associated with a high-end lifestyle and a different kind of stardom. In this paper I engage with the expanded sphere of what is designated as YouTube and social media through the worlds of B grade female performers who are particularly prone to viral mutation on the web. Through online ethnography of ephemeral female celebrity cults via the case of contemporary starlets who attempt to make it big by getting entangled in controversies over obscenities. The knowledge of film material being censored then locates its YouTube video in a liminal zone, where the restricted content defers the desire for the provocative material ad infinitum while replacing it with a constant affective curiosity about the –censored (YouTube often acts as the archive of deleted/blurred footage from censored films). To account for the affectivities associated with low resolution and to chart a contemporary archaeology of viral videos we need to trace it back to the phenomenon of print journalism highlighting the censorious elements in film advertisements to create a surge in spectator desire for the censored. Internet virality (though far more complicated than physical rush to the theatres, as the desire here spreads like a contagion from one network to another cutting across geo boundaries) marked by its velocity of circulation and feedback finds its precedent in hype over sensational content in older media. The velocity at which an orphan video file often manages to create a virtual agglomeration of temporary online crowd via YouTube’s techno-mediatic and pseudo anonymity driven economy of views, likes and comments, shares its features with an earlier rumour economy based on information bleeding out of one media into another. Using the YouTube interface of a “viral item number”,

'Babydoll' (*Ragini MMS 2*, Bhushan Patel, 2014) and its corollary "suggested viewing" of leaked videos, morphed content, MMS scandals of Sunny Leone I wish to point out the combined play of viral web based mutation, the algorithmic anxiety underlying YouTube's designation of "official" versus "unofficial/user" uploads and thus the *extensions* of the video (rather than the original video) being the drive of the interface. It heightens the frisson of sexual excitement and shock carried out as part of online traffic. A relation emerges here between virality, as relayed through the node of the spectator-user (toucher, in the haptic sense), and new orders or flows of sexuality. I use the term spectator-user here to challenge notions of classical cinematic apparatus, a rather contingent identity for the technologically enabled body of the user of new media who affectively consumes images of the star body made accessible by the YouTube video allowing conversion of the object of fascination into one that is proximate, touchable, morphable.

12.30-1.30 – Lunch Break

Curated Screenings I: 1.30-2.30 pm

A Selection of Videos from Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan)

Curated by Stefan Rusu (Artist & Curator, Kyrgyzstan)

The program is compiled based on the project *Reimagining the New Man/Practicing civic duties through social and visual media* curated by Stefan Rusu and organized in collaboration with Dushanbe Art Ground team from Tajikistan in 2014. Its aim was to understand, analyze and question civic engagement and participatory practices by means of social and visual media in contemporary Tajikistan, and the project included public events/screenings and hands-on workshops around found footage in Dushanbe, Tajikistan with participants from Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan) including Tajikistan.

Intervention I: 2.45 – 3.45

Underbelly of a City: The toing and froing between amateur and art-house films

Madhuja Mukherjee (Associate Professor, Film Studies, Jadavpur University, Calcutta)

Moderated by Ahmet Gurata

Synopsis: "Some day in near future everyone will be a filmmaker" -Anonymous.

The 'video' turn, following the introduction of Sony's 'Portapak' in 1965, triggered intriguing and incredible possibilities. In fact, by 1968 exhibitions of video-art took place across Latin-America, USA, Europe (particularly in Germany and UK), in Japan and elsewhere. Thus, while artistic experiments with the moving-image was not unprecedented, especially when Salvador Dali and Luis Bunuel, Maya Deren, Stan Brakhage and others had already explored formal elements of moving-images, along with the materiality of celluloid; nevertheless, the arrival of video seemed to destabilize the medium itself, and alter certain primary perceptions regarding framing, tonality, depth, clarity, and sanctity of the image and sound as well as prototypes of plot, narrative and logic. 'Video' notably blurred the lines between genres, 'high' art and 'mass' aesthetics, amateur and professional projects, the political and personal. More recently, with the mass proliferation of digital technology in India during early 1990s

our relationship with the image has been reinvented. As far as the filmic image (and sound) is concerned, precision, sharpness, and brightness have been enhanced; moreover, with the mass availability of digital camera and easily downloadable edit software and other artistic tools, engagements with images have changed in manifold ways, resulting in an upsurge of films, videos, photographs, sound byte and a range of other kinds of data. As stated by filmmaker Samira Makhmalbaf (in 2000) digital tools support circulation of both technologies and images across marginal territories.

The crux of the discussion, therefore, is the contemporary digital context, that has rendered the flow of images forceful, and networks between artists pertinent. I will largely discuss videos/ digital films, which have become available to us through the TENT (Kolkata) *Little Cinema International Festival* (for experimental films and media-art). Through a series of clippings (*of at least an hour*), I wish to deliberate upon the manner in which the video-film has become a smoldering and liminal site, which lies somewhere between the white cube and classrooms. Moreover, one argues that, with the massive circulation of digital tools a new persona named 'amateur'/ untrained/ professional elsewhere 'type' filmmaker has emerged on the scene, in tandem with the explosion of small and numerous film festivals across the country. While the digital platform has encouraged cinephiles to circulate European art house films and Asian genre flicks etc., the 'tools' one contends, have produced a rather promiscuous figure, partly poet and partly artist perhaps, who comes forward as a 'filmmaker'. *This presentation thus, tackles the specific category of 'amateur' films*, which have been produced primarily from Kolkata. Despite the problems of framing these films within certain presumptions regarding knowledge of the craft, these videos/ films are distinguishable from 'home videos'. Therefore, I examine the ways in which some travel to well-known International festivals, while others pass-around on the fringes. Predominantly a masculine 'hobby' of sorts, and in most cases made by college pass outs, such 'amateur' artistic ventures, nevertheless, often excavates a range peculiarities of the city, and functions as a personal and independent 'gaze' that is looking back at the metropolis. By looking into the formal explorations of these short and feature-length films, this presentation underscores the 'toing and froing' between art and amateur, via which the city underbelly becomes partly visible.

Plenary I: 4.00-5.30

The video and the crowd: publics and postpublics.

Ravi Sundaram (Professor, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi)

Chair: Geert Lovink

Synopsis: A growing plurality of populations in Asia, Africa and Latin America have now got regular access to mobile devices. In India the bulk of Internet access is now mediated through mobile networks. Unsurprisingly, this has produced great challenges for postcolonial design, now confronted by media-enabled populations previously seen mostly as social political actors. Today, mobile media objects move in and out of infrastructures; and attach themselves to shifting platforms of political-aesthetic action while disrupting older partitions of postcolonial governance. As in the rest of the world, media periodically overflow from one channel to another leading to unanticipated consequences: the expose of a police atrocity or political secrets, a leaked intimate video. The transformation of public speech and expression in contemporary data

infrastructures in the South open up questions of collectivity in ways unimagined but a decade ago. In this presentation I look at volatile incidents involving street crowds broadcasting in real time through mobile applications like Whatsapp. The blurring of street crowds and online agglomerations, private chat networks and public expression raise all kind of questions – for media theory as well as the performance of postcolonial sovereignty.

Programmes at The Mill Hall, 23rd February

3.00-6.00: Workshop: Networked Performances and Ubiquitous Webjaying by Anne Roquigny.

The Internet can be perceived as a gigantic external hard drive, a storage mechanism which allows us to download an infinity of visual, textual and audio content in real-time. The WEBJAYS performances are envisaged as online explorations and incursions. Artists, curators are invited to use the device and to imagine playlists of websites. The playlists reveal unexpected associations, aesthetic narratives based on online resources. The « surf » a typically intimate and individual activity becomes a shared and collective experience, where the viewer is invited. The WEBJAYS productions aim to show that the Internet is not only a commercial space, but also a place full of teeming artistic potential. **The workshop is free but limited to 6 participants.** We particularly invite applications from artists, curators, students, people interested in net-based projects. To register for the workshop please send a brief statement of interest to Rashmi.sawhney@gmail.com by 20th February.

6.15 pm: What you Don't see is what you Get (WYDSIWYG)

artist's talk by Sharath Chandra Ram (Transmission Artist and Faculty at Srishti)

Synopsis: This talk shifts the critical focus away from the aesthetics of fetishised interfaces of access amplified by today's networked consumer technologies, towards invisible broadcast infrastructures and data ecosystems that exist in demarcated 'signal' territories that harness the natural re-source of the wireless electromagnetic spectrum as well as terrestrial inter-networks and infrastructures. It revisits practices from art-science explorations that deal with information encoding for visual imagery, that point to possibilities in hybrid media networks for remote access, distribution and archiving and opens up discussions around telecom and access policies. From intercepting imagery from the local TV broadcast stations and polar orbiting satellites to ways of interpreting film as a sonic remote re-transmission of text, we shall also consider ways in which offline spaces and online interfaces could be bridged by experimental media broadcast infrastructures.

7.00 pm onwards *Gyrated*: hula audiovisual interface by Elena Knox (Research Fellow in Intermedia Art and Science at Waseda University, Tokyo)

Synopsis: So much of our present image consumption happens while sitting and watching a screen, our bodies static and purely receptive. We're encouraged to vary our visual focal length, or to stretch occasionally. But there's no avoiding the fact that, in the extremely digital present, we are becoming more sedentary. *Gyrated* brings the body

back, rendering us, as image-consumers, kinetically present. This participatory installation uses a custom-made hula hoop by which people can “drive” video and sound playback. Not confined to the face and fingers, *Gyrated* asks you to work your booty to get the images rolling, creating a fun, enlightening and reciprocal bond between body and technology.

Engaging both the nostalgic and contemporary popularity of hula hooping, *Gyrated* is a joyfully literal take on being a cog in a machine. Thematically, it manifests the (post)human emplacement in the networked image-machine itself, and a lively critique of the disembodied, minor effort usually spent in consuming digital content. It requires a full-body commitment to confronting our extreme digital consumption practices, and of our actual emplacement and complicity in the image-scape.

Friday, 24th February, 2017 @ Hotel 18, Fort Kochi

Plenary II: 10.00-11.30

From Selfie to Mask Design, On the Politics and Aesthetics of the Online Self

Geert Lovink (Founder, Institute of Network Cultures)

Chair: Ahmet Gurata

Synopsis: The mass selfie cult and the need to protect one’s privacy through filters, crypto apps and masks are two sides of the same coin. Both have a similar tech aesthetics and depend on the same centralized infrastructure that platform capitalism provides us. What are current strategies towards own vulnerable online identity?

Panel III: Digital technologies and New Communities: 11.30-12.30

Chair: Andana Kapur

The DIY Filmmaker in the Digital Age - Akriti Rastogi (Ph.D. Candidate in Cinema Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)

Synopsis: The paper will track the journey of DIY filmmakers in the Indian context harnessing the potential of ICTs in collation with other factors like broadband connectivity and data mining suited to the interests of a dilettante filmmaker. Using case studies of amateur and professional filmmakers, the key provocations will highlight the “dissolution of dichotomy” between the two headers and further, the implication on the cinema created, distributed and funded thus, using the online platforms solely.¹ The idea of democratization of filmmaking will be complicated using nuances from varied categories of filmmakers utilizing prosumer devices.

Mapping Cultural Histories of Asian Ethnic Enclaves in the Global City - Kristy Kang (Assistant Professor at the School of Art, Design and Media, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)

Synopsis: This project looks at how ethnic communities are changing in cities. How is migration and movement changing our experience of cities and its peoples today? How is our sense of identity and place affected as a result? What kind of interfaces could be designed to communicate with the spaces we move through and what kind of overlooked stories could be uncovered in our everyday spaces? *The Seoul of Los Angeles: Contested Identities and Transnationalism in Immigrant Space* (<http://www.seoulola.com>) is an online cultural history and platform for community storytelling on the multi-ethnic identity and development of Koreatown in Los Angeles. Currently, Los Angeles has the largest population of Koreans in the United States living outside of Korea. Nicknamed the “L.A. district of Seoul City”, most visitors understand Koreatown as an extension of Seoul. But, what most people may not know is that the majority of inhabitants who comprise its residential and working class population are not Korean, but Latino. The everyday space of this community is inhabited by a mix of immigrants coming from Mexico, Central and South America, and other parts of Asia including Bangladesh. These networks of nationalisms converge in the urban space of Koreatown. This contests predominant conceptions of ethnic enclaves in Los Angeles being understood as homogenous and makes us re-imagine what we think we understand about them—they are increasingly becoming polycentric in complex ways. Combining design, documentary and issues in contemporary media studies including global/local relations, ethnic and urban studies, this work uses new media and mapping to create greater awareness of our built environment and the peoples who populate it. It examines and visualizes the sociocultural networks shaping immigrant communities and how local neighbourhoods negotiate a sense of place within one global city.

Artists’ Talks I: 12.30-1.30

With Ayisha Abraham & Rahee Punyashloka
Moderated by Rashmi Sawhney

Deteriorating Memories: Scavenging for Home Movies in an East Bangalore Neighbourhood by Ayisha Abraham (Artist and Dean, Contemporary Arts Practice, Srishti)

Synopsis: It is now almost 15 years since I began to collect home movies, 8mm and Super 8mm celluloid film from an era of amateur film making. These fragments of films span from the 1930s till the early 1980s and have been rearranged into short found footage films that are both experimental, i.e. without obvious narrative, and bio pic style documentary. In my talk, I will chronicle this journey, discuss why amateur films have something to offer us, and illustrate with a few short clips, some of the films I have made, as part of my artistic practice .

What Does the Digital Image See?: Noise Reductions, Ontological Deductions etc.
by Rahee Punyashloka (Visual Artist & Filmmaker)

Synopsis: I started working with the “cameraless” digital image-making at a time when a global unrest regarding image-making itself was proliferating. The Digital vs. Film debate was at full flow with prophetic claims of absolute overhaul in the very ontology of the image occurring from both sides. It was a time when the Kodak factory was yet to restart its (then newly ‘obsolete’) production of film reel, and the nostalgia for the “pure

materiality” of the celluloid image had begun to be celebrated, especially by the experimental filmmakers, across the globe. In such a climate, partly moved by my own bias *for* the digital image, and, partly driven by an axiom that “the preoccupations and possibilities of the digital image are to be sought elsewhere, and not merely as a replacement for the film-image”, I devised a set of experimental juxtapositions of disparate elements of both “film” and “digital” images, titled “Noise Reduction”. With these, I had hoped to attain digital moving-images that flawlessly *simulate* the materiality of the film-image, and, as a consequence, “solve”, at least for me, some of the key questions of the Film vs. Digital debate.

Of course, contrary to my own expectations, and in a sense *true* to their experimental mode of production, the resulting images suggested many new directions and posited several new discursive possibilities regarding image ontology, materiality, digital indexes, and the peculiarly ungraspable character of video “noise”.

By highlighting and analyzing some of the key issues regarding the aforementioned *topics* through 3 of the Noise Reduction films which I have made till date, i.e. *Noise Reduction I: The Big Combo*, *Noise Reduction II: Chinatown*, and *Noise Reduction III: Z (Film)*, I would try to explore and explicate upon an approximate “ontology of the digital image”. With this exploration, we would also try to hypothesize a few points regarding the *essential* question of contemporary times: “*What is the future of The Image?*”

1.30-2.30 – Lunch Break

Artist’s Talk II: 2.30-3.30

***House of Women (2016, 14”)* and an artist’s talk** by Michelle Williams Gmaker
(Visual artist & filmmaker, and Lecturer at Goldsmiths College, London)

Synopsis

In 1946, auditions were held for the character of the silent dancing girl Kanchi in *Black Narcissus*, the upcoming film by venerated British directors Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger. In a nationwide search close to 1000 hopefuls applied, with over 200 girls tested and interviewed. The coveted role finally went to seventeen-year-old Jean Simmons, who had recently won worldwide acclaim for her performance as Estella in David Lean’s *Great Expectations*. To fulfil the role, the white English actress had to wear dark Panstick make-up and a jewel in her nose to become the “exotic temptress” of Rumer Godden’s novel of the same name.

In late 2014, I recast the role, auditioning only Indian ex-pat or first-generation British Asian women and non-binary individuals living in London. Shot on 16mm film, the four candidates, Jasdeep Kandola, Arunima Rajkumar, Tina Mander and Krishna Isha, had to introduce themselves to an anonymous reader (voiced by Kelly Hunter) and recite a personalised alphabet including references to the history of photography and gender politics. They were also asked to read lines from a script while both seated and standing in order to experience the somewhat unnatural and staged conditions of the audition. Unlike in the original role, for *House of Women* the re-cast Kanchi of the 21st Century *speaks*, and instead of being ‘just a body’ her voice is fuelled with personal and political charge.

During the recital, an image of the Himalayas appears within a masked out rectangle – a digital invocation of the mountains of *Black Narcissus*. The mountains

signal the digital medium of the modern age into which Kanchi will enter, stepping from the medium of film into the sequel to *House of Women: The Fruit is There to be Eaten* (Williams Gamaker, 2017).

In *The Fruit is There to be Eaten*, Krishna Isha, who 'won' the role of Kanchi in *House of Women*, will act as interlocutor to question the romantic and political decisions troubling a re-cast Sister Clodagh (Charlotte Gallagher, originally played by Deborah Kerr). This politically more assertive Kanchi's modern presence offers alternative insights in order to break with the often doom-laden fate of Powell and Pressburger's female protagonists, all of whom seem destined to fall.

Artist's Statement (further context)

My introduction to the films of British directors Powell & Pressburger began as a teenager. Cooped up on rainy Saturday afternoons in a semi-detached in Brent, watching matinees on BBC2, for me the erotically charged *Black Narcissus* (1947) based on Rumer Godden's 1939 novel of the same name stood out from the emotionally stiff British films of the 1940s. Lush Technicolor and the sweltering tropics permeated cold suburbia, offering melodrama and the exquisite pain of unrequited love: everything a teenage girl thrives on.

Working with the phrase 'our mountains are painted on glass', I have made a series of works that aim to foreground the precarious nature of Powell's reference to Walter Percy Day's large-scale landscape Matte paintings of the Himalayas.

Powell said: *Our mountains were painted on glass. We decided to do the whole thing in the studio and that's the way we managed to maintain colour control to the very end. Sometimes in a film its theme or its colour are more important than the plot.*

As such, the British Studio System, like its American counterpart, looked to the colonies to offer audiences exotic contexts in which to frame their dramas. But more often than not did so within the comfort of constructed sets at, among others, Elstree, Shepperton and Pinewood.

I am deeply interested in this tension between construction and illusion, and in the gaps in representation and the spaces opened up by the "fiction machine" of the 1940s British studio system, which presented a very controlled colonial vision of the British Raj and its people, often replacing Indian actors with British actors. And just as those auditioning for *House of Women* feel the glare of the studio lights, the space of the audition and the violence of the camera's gaze are brought into question, while the film plays with the inherent voyeurism of the director – and by inference the viewer – in watching young hopefuls competing for a role.

Panel IV: Video Theory: 4.00 – 5.30

Chair: Andreas Treske

The Autobiography of Video: A Technocentric Approach to Early Video Art - Ina Blom (Professor, University of Oslo)

Synopsis: In this lecture I will discuss the ways in which the technical arrangements of analog video opened onto new forms of social memory and hence also new social ontologies. Here, I trace the agency of a technological object that (among other things) deployed artistic and aesthetic formats and contexts as a way of exploring of its own temporalizing affordances. While such an approach may be associated with an

anthropological tradition preoccupied with the biography of objects, my approach suggests a significant twist in this narrative: video now appears as an *autobiographical* inscription revolving around its specific forms of memory.

<VideoTheoryII> Shiny things so bright - Andreas Treske (Professor, University of Bilkent, Ankara)

Synopsis: Online video has become the driving force on the web. From a static line the web evolved to a dynamic audio-visual network, constantly creating and operating temporal objects. The moving image online is the most significant and spreading form of personal media on the Internet. The recording, editing, distributing and mixing of personal means of expressions pushes a wide range of technologies and applications for the web and devices. Web space is developing as video space with distinct aesthetics. A multitude of actors, a world of possibilities, an evolving industry pushes towards a personal cinema and the personal gesture. The web space embeds these personal gestures and creates through video a sphere or living cell, expanding our physical space endlessly. The Web through video advances to an actor in our environment, an ecological system and a live-like being that relates to us, and exists with us. This talk aims to engage in structural and aesthetic questions of online-video cultures and video on the web. It will be a certain mode of slicing and opening up questions for becoming involved with for a new theory of the moving image parented through online video.

Film Screening: 5.45-7.00 pm

War at a Distance (Harun Farocki, 2003, video, 58") introduced by Vasanthi Mariadass (Faculty at Srishti)

Synopsis: In 1991, when images of the Gulf War flooded the international media, it was virtually impossible to distinguish between real pictures and those generated on computer. This loss of bearings was to change forever our way of deciphering what we see.

The image is no longer used only as testimony, but also as an indispensable link in a process of production and destruction. This is the central premise of *War at a Distance*, which continues the deconstruction of claims to visual objectivity Harun Farocki developed in his earlier work. With the help of archival and original material, Farocki sets out in effect to define the relationship between military strategy and industrial production and sheds light on how the technology of war finds applications in everyday life.

Programmes @ The Mill Hall, 24th February

3.00-6.00: Workshop: Networked Performances and Ubiquitous Webjaying
by Anne Roquigny.

Saturday, 25th February @ Hotel 18, Fort Kochi

Workshop with Geert Lovink: 10.00 – 1.00

Beyond the State of Internet Criticism: Lessons to be learnt for Contemporary Art Criticism

This workshop consists of two parts. In the first we will discuss latest development in internet criticism, its latest issues and differences in comparison with, for instance, literary and film criticism. In the second part we look at new techniques art criticism can use to go beyond its paper ghetto of the art magazine and the newspaper. How can critics use online video, podcasting, blogs and social media? How does the use of these tools change the relationship towards the art works, the artists, the art system, and last but not least, the audience?

** Limited to 20 participants: to register for the workshop write to rashmi.sawhney@srishti.ac.in by 20 February.*

Curated Screening II: 2.00-4.00

CologneOFF Asia Focus & Refugee Film Collection from the New Museum of Networked Art curated by Wilfried Agricola de Cologne. (Media Artist & Curator, Germany)

Description: The selection Focus/Asia includes artists from Western and Eastern areas of Asia, eg. Palestine, Israel, Turkey, Iran - Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, China, Philippines, and Japan. The very short moving images use a common pictorial language which is characterized by individual aesthetics and philosophical concepts – Ying and Yang are nearly in harmony, wouldn't be there a typical subtle criticism, which does not accuse, however – abstractly transformed into symbols and metaphors which need to be decoded first. Differently than the familiar narratives of a short or features film, these videos start a process or even multiple processes, but do not complete them - leaving the viewer in confusion inviting him to complete the process via reflecting. In this way, each video is incorporating a kind of interactive component. The presentation format in shape of a screening giving the viewer only one chance to view requires a particular attention, also because the non-linear structures of the individual video and the screening program, as such, are generating again and again - the unexpected.

The selection "Focus/World" is based on "The Refugee Film Collection" at The New Museum of Networked Art initiated by Wilfried Agricola de Cologne in 2015 on occasion of the international refugee crisis. The selected videos created by artists from Germany, Israel, Morocco, France, Netherlands, Mexico, Croatia and Ukraine, deal with the global phenomenon of transmigration which got these day a particular relevance through military conflicts and terror (Middle East, Ukraine), poverty and lack of perspectives (Africa, Asia, Latin America), also caused by failed national and international politics and economics and the natural and human-made climate change resulting countless individual human tragedies. The videos offer a view on different sides of transmigration, for those who migrate an uprooting but on the other hand a chance for survival, but for those who are supposed to give them shelter migrants are too often not experienced as a chance, but rather a thread causing a loss of privileges manifested in foreclosure, xenophobia, racism and violence. The artists dedicate their reflection to empathy and humanity.

Artist's Talk & Curated Screening: III - 4.00 – 5.00

Violent Opaque by Ray Tat (independent artist and curator, Shanghai)
Moderated by Andreas Treske

Synopsis: VIOLENT OPAQUE is an ongoing project articulating the relationships between violence and opacity in our hyper-mediated present. The idea of an aesthetic called VIOLENT OPAQUE emerges in response to the ideologies of transparency and the utopias of encryption pervading contemporary debates. Settling in a muddled space in-between transparent screens and black boxes, translucent interfaces and black mirrors, crystalline displays and black stacks, VIOLENT OPAQUE foregrounds the uncertainty, unclear and precarity that are always present in any sort of communication.

VIOLENT OPAQUE consists of a manifesto (<http://violentopaque.space/>), a two-day pre-show at the Chronus Art Center (Shanghai), a post-mortem debate two weeks later at Basement6 (Shanghai), as well as several Skype sessions and cross-mediated feedbacks. According to current plans, VIOLENT OPAQUE will culminate into a final streaming-based show across multiple exhibition spaces in different geographical locales.

The show-reel for Video Vortex #11 consists of a montage of the video works shown during the VIOLENT OPAQUE pre-show, augmented with works submitted by the show's audience during the exhibition itself, archived recordings of VOIP communications between the artists, as well as other peripheral material such as performance documentation, discarded footage and found videos. The purpose of the VIOLENT OPAQUE show-reel is to offer reflections and provocations on the opacity of violence and the violence of opacity by a dispersed group of artists (US, Malaysia, China and Taiwan) in a format that includes several layers of backstage communications and organizational documentation, resulting in a thick and disorienting visual experience that is constantly referencing itself while also leaking out in unexpected directions.

Artists Talk IV: 5.00-5.30

Inceptionalism: Artificial Neural Networks in creating visual narratives

by Anjana Kothamachu (independent mixed-media artist)

Programmes at The Mill Hall, 25th February

3.00-6.00: Workshop: Networked Performances and Ubiquitous Webjaying by Anne Roquigny.

Artist's Talk III & Titchner's Cage VR installation: 6.00-7.00

'Poly-Body Visions' by Nadav Assar (Assistant Professor and an Associate Director of the Center for Arts & Technology, Connecticut College, USA)

Synopsis: In this artist talk, I will introduce my thoughts on fragmented, distributed, polyphonic, and most of all embodied seeing, as put into practice in my recent projects: Strip / Musrara, Future Absentees, and the mixed reality piece Titchner's Cage (installation on display during VV XI). While spectacular cinema has nearly perfected the focused visual spectacle, and virtual reality tempts with promises of understanding other people, places, and experiences, simply by assuming a different audiovisual point of view, I would like to offer an alternative view, one that mediates and filters the cinematic, abstracted audiovisual experience through the body. Or rather, through a multiplicity of bodies: A plurality of points of view, all possessed of and affected by moving, slipping, thinking, feeling, identified bodies. The bodies I'll present are

sometimes human, at other times mechanical; sometimes choreographically synchronized, at other times individually driven; sometimes concrete and approachable in real time, at other times only ghostly shells of themselves. There are several common themes to the projects I'll discuss:

- Decentralization of the image: a preference of a plural, mobile point of view
- Acknowledgement of difference in bodies and perspectives
- Participatory media-making, site-specificity, immersion through production

Closing Performance @ 7.00 pm

Networked Performances and Ubiquitous Webjaying

Anne Roquigny and her team of webjays.

Description: The Internet can be perceived as a gigantic external hard drive, a storage mechanism which allows us to download an infinity of visual, textual and audio content in real-time. The WEBJAYS performances are envisaged as online explorations and incursions. Artists, curators are invited to use the device and to imagine playlists of websites. The playlists reveal unexpected associations, aesthetic narratives based on online resources. The WEBJAYS performance will draw upon the material generated during the four-day workshop that Anne will conduct with a group of 6 artists in Kochi. The workshop will be held from 23-25 February from 3-7 pm daily at the Mill Hall, Mattancherry. To register for the workshop write to Rashmi.sawhney@gmail.com before 20th February.

Participant Bios

Ahmet Gurata teaches at the Department of Communication and Design, Bilkent University. He holds a PhD from the London Consortium, which examined remakes and cross-cultural reception in Turkish cinema. He has published research on the history of Turkish cinema, reception, remakes and documentary in anthologies and journals. His current research included projects on digital database, comparative and digital film studies. He also works as a programmer for the Festival on Wheels and affiliated with Docedge: Asian Forum for Documentary.

Akriti Rastogi is a part-time media practitioner and full-time film studies research scholar at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU, New Delhi. She is currently working towards her doctoral thesis proposal.

Anandana Kapur is an award-winning filmmaker and communications designer working extensively towards integrating film and social change initiatives. As a researcher and film scholar, she has written on gender, culture and cinema. Anandana's current work is on interactive cinema and the city of Delhi. She is the co-founder of CINEMAD India.

Andreas Treske is an author and filmmaker living in Turkey. He graduated from the University of Television and Film, Munich, where he also taught film and video post-

production. He teaches in the Department of Communication and Design at Bilkent University, Ankara, visual communication and media production, incl. new media. He is a member of the video vortex network and corresponding member of CILECT, the world association of film schools.

Anne Roquigny is a French independent media art curator specialized in hybrid digital projects related to networks, the internet, sound and visual arts. Since the beginning of the Internet she has been curating events to promote internet artists and to exhibit their online art in the physical space. Anne Roquigny's Webjays innovative public displays, performances, exhibitions, workshops, conferences and publications have been presented at renowned International venues, festivals and museums.

>> More info / <http://www.roquigny.info>: www.roquigny.info

Ayisha Abraham lives and works in Bangalore, as an installation artist and short filmmaker. She studied painting in India and the United States, before becoming an experimental filmmaker and installation artist. She works at the Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology, as a visual arts consultant and is a member of the BAR1 (Bengaluru Artists Residency). Her work has been shown at numerous international exhibitions and festivals.

Elena Knox is a media and performance artist. Currently a research fellow in Intermedia Art and Science at Waseda University, Tokyo, she works with the Creative Robotics Lab at Australia's National Institute for Experimental Arts, and co-directs production house Lull Studios. Her PhD won the 2015 Dean's Award at UNSW Australia Art & Design, and her experimental electro-cabarets and music projects are nominated for multiple awards, most recently the Australian Art Music Awards. Knox's media artworks have been presented in premiere venues in New York, Cologne, Berlin, Athens, Hong Kong, Plovdiv, Frankfurt, Milan, Aberystwyth, London, Tokyo, Sydney, Melbourne and Cairo.

Fabiola Hanna is a new media artist & software designer. She is a PhD candidate in Film and Digital Media at UC Santa Cruz where she also holds an MFA in Digital Arts & New Media. Her research lies in software and media studies, archives, memory & postcolonialism, and new media art activism.

Geert Lovink is a Dutch media theorist, internet critic and author of *Dark Fiber* (2002), *Zero Comments* (2007), *Networks Without a Cause* (2012) and *Social Media Abyss* (2016). He is the founder of the Institute of Network Cultures. His centre recently organized conferences, publications and research networks such as Video Vortex (the politics and aesthetics of online video), *Unlike Us* (alternatives in social media), *Critical Point of View* (Wikipedia), *Society of the Query* (the culture of search), *MoneyLab* (internet-based revenue models in the arts) and a project on the future of art criticism.

Ina Blom is a professor at University of Oslo/ University of Chicago. Her most recent books are *The Autobiography of Video. The Life and Times of a Memory Technology*, New York: 2016 and *On the Style Site. Art, Sociality and Media Culture*. New York: 2007 (2009). She has recently coedited the volume *Memory in Motion. Archives, Technology*

and the Social (2017), and is also a contributor to *Artforum*, *Texte zur Kunst*, *Afterall* and *Parkett*.

Karl Mendonca's work as an artist and researcher explores the intersection of post-colonial studies and media studies. He is currently a PhD Candidate at the department of Film & Digital Media at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Kristy H.A. Kang is a media artist and scholar whose work explores narratives of place and geographies of cultural memory. She is Assistant Professor at the School of Art, Design and Media at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore and was previously Associate Director of the Spatial Analysis Lab (SLAB) at the University of Southern California Sol Price School of Public Policy in Los Angeles where she collaborated with urban planners and policy specialists on ways to visualize overlooked spaces and peoples. Her research interests combine urban and ethnic studies and digital media arts to visualize cultural histories of cities. Kang is a founding member of the Labyrinth Project research initiative on interactive narrative and digital scholarship at USC where she has served as researcher, creative director, and designer on a range of interdisciplinary projects. These works have been presented at venues including the Getty Center, The ZKM Center for Art and Media, Museum of Art at Seoul National University, and received several awards including the Jury Award for New Forms at the Sundance Online Film Festival. She received her Ph.D. in Media Arts and Practice at the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts. <http://www.kristykang.com/>

Madhuja Mukherjee studied Literature and Film at the University level, and has professional training in music (Sitar), and fine arts. She teaches in the Department of Film Studies, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, India, since 2007. She also works as artist, filmmaker and writer. Mukherjee's research areas involve subjects of film historiography, archives, industrial forms, technological transformations, gender, and public cultures. She has published extensively in scholarly journals, has edited anthologies, and written monograph on canon formation during the early period. Her feature-films 'CARNIVAL' (2012, Writer-Director), and 'QISSA' (2013, Co-written with the Director), have been selected for international festivals, and have received prestigious awards. She has developed the alternative art platform TENT (Calcutta); in 2014 TENT launched its first 'Little Cinema International Festival' for experimental films and art. Mukherjee has done a series of (solo) media-installations at renowned art galleries, and is working on her second graphic novel - 'The Dog Star' - supported by the India Foundation for the Arts, Bangalore, India.

Michelle Williams Gamaker is a visual artist and filmmaker. Current projects include *The Fruit is There to be Eaten*, *Brown Queertopia* and the feature films *The Imperial* and *Violet Culbo*, which feature 'brown protagonists' to address the historical sidelining of such characters. For over 13 years, with Mieke Bal she completed several films and installations exploring migratory aesthetics, mental health and gender ideology. Since 2009, with Julia Kouneski she has explored the psychotherapeutic work of Lygia Clark. She completed her PhD in Fine Art at Goldsmiths, University of London (2012), where she now works as a Lecturer in BA Fine Art. www.michellewilliamsgamaker.com

Nadav Assor employs a range of expanded media practices to explore the unstable condition of the hyper mediated body, the “new flesh”, constantly transformed by technology, in its immediate social, political sensory, and emotional environment. This is often done via lo-fi reenactments of appropriated military-industrial technologies, examining technological mediation as an essential and transformative human condition. For more than 10 years, Assor has performed and exhibited internationally in festivals, music venues, museums and galleries in North America, Israel, Europe and Asia. Some recent venues for his work include Hong-Gah Museum Taipei, Centre Arts Santa Monica Barcelona, Hyphen Hub NYC, Edith-Russ-Haus Oldenburg, Transmediale Festival Berlin, the European Media Arts Festival, the Soundwave Biennial San Francisco, Residency Unlimited NYC, Hyde Park Art Center in Chicago, the Koffler Center in Toronto, Julie M Gallery Tel Aviv, Xuzhou Museum, China, and many others. Assor’s work was reviewed in publications such as Haaretz, Time Out, the Creators Project, Vice Motherboard, Art Monthly UK, and more. His recent solo show “Angels”, featuring a prayer-chanting hexacopter and other drone-based work, was an Artforum Critic’s Pick. He holds an MFA in Art & Technology from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2010, full merit fellow), where he was an inaugural recipient of the Edes Award, the graduate school’s highest honor. He is the recipient of multiple grants and awards in the US and Israel, and currently serves as an Assistant Professor and an Associate Director of the Center for Arts & Technology at Connecticut College in the US. See more of his work at Nadassor.net.

Rahee Punyashloka is a visual artist and filmmaker based in New Delhi who processes analogue techniques in digital media and is inspired by the work of Hollis Frampton and Pat O’Neill. His works have been exhibited in several venues across the world, such as Rotterdam, Tribeca (New York), Jakarta, New Delhi etc.

Rashmi Sawhney is a Bangalore-based academic, occasional writer, co-founder of the [VisionMix](#) network and the Programme Director of Video Vortex XI. She has curated public events in India and Europe, including film programmes, and most recently co-curated ‘Future Orbits’ as a collateral of the Kochi-Muzeris biennial. Her research explores the production, circulation and exhibition of moving image cultures at the intersections of cinema, visual arts, and digital media in the South Asian context and she has a special interest in [science fiction film and video](#). Rashmi has been teaching, doing research, and [publishing](#) since 2002, and prior to joining Srishti, was Associate Professor at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University and also briefly headed the Arts Practice and Curatorship programmes at India Foundation for the Arts. At Srishti, she heads the [M.A. programme in Aesthetics and Visual Cultures](#).

Ravi Sundaram is a Professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi. In 2000 he founded the well-known Sarai programme at the CSDS along with Ravi Vasudevan and the Raqs Media Collective. Since then, Sarai grew to become one of India’s best-known experimental and critical research sites on media, spanning local and global sites. Sundaram is the author of *Pirate Modernity: Media Urbanism in Delhi* and *No Limits: Media Studies from India* (Delhi, 2013). Sundaram has co-edited the

Sarai Reader series, *The Public Domain* (2001), *The Cities of Everyday Life* (2002), *Shaping Technologies* (2003), *Crisis Media*(2004). His recently edited *No Limits: Media Studies from India* came out in 2015. Sundaram's essays have been translated into various languages in India, Asia, and Europe. He is currently finishing his next book project, *Events and Affections: post-public media circulation*. Sundaram has been a visiting Professor at the universities of Princeton, Johns Hopkins, Michigan, Ann Arbor, and Oxford.

Ray Tat is a Malaysian curator and artist currently based in Shanghai. He graduated with a Masters in Fine Arts from Massey University, New Zealand. Prior to VIOLENT OPAQUE he curated a show in Malaysia called *Circle Jerks*, (https://issuu.com/projectmot/docs/catalog_new) an exhibition revolving around artists as online conversationalists, and works generated from text messages circulating on the internet. In this show he performed the figure of Wang Rou, a post-internet curator operating in accordance to a semblance of coherent communal relations organized around the desire for control that one invests in a user name. Likewise, as an extension of my video art and performance practice, his subsequent efforts of curation have been preoccupied by what Robert Pfaller and Slavoj Žižek call interpassivity, a condition in which archival media becomes fetishized as a symbol of activity in place of actual activity.

Like many users prone to hysteria and heated exchanges online, he avoids processing subjective affect by displacing them as linguistic relations between himself and other users – hence on a personal level, his desire to communicate transparently is bound to an opacity embedded in the very relations in which he emerges as a mediated presence online. Hence his practice to this date has been marked by formalizations of subjective dispositions as a way of psychological displacement – for example, instead of registering his own identity politics he would claim that he is performing the politics of identity. This 'aesthetic of opacity' is connected to how he relegates affective content as external power relations – any attempt to challenge these relations makes him recursively chase his own footsteps.

Sharath Chandra Ram's practice and research interests lie at the intersection of law, technology and society with a focus on Open Spectrum, Citizen Science and new interfaces for Art-Science. As a licensed amateur radio broadcaster (callsign: VU3HPA), he is actively interested in communication policy research, extends his art-science practice as a transmission artist and has installed his multimedia work in several national and international venues. He is currently Faculty at the Srishti Institute of Art Design and Technology at the Centre for Experimental Media Art and the Information Arts and Information Design Practices (IAIDP) Program. Previously as a neuroscientist employing virtual reality to simulate experimental paradigms to understand human cognition, he specialized in Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Environments at the University of Edinburgh, School of Informatics.

Silpa Mukherjee is a Delhi based research scholar, currently enrolled in a PhD programme in Cinema Studies, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University. She has recently finished her MPhil dissertation titled 'An Ecology of

Sensations: The Item Number in Bombay Cinema'. She has been a recipient of the Social Media Research Grant awarded by The Sarai Programme, Center for the Study of Developing Societies in 2015.

Soudhamini has a Masters in English Literature from Stella Maris College, Madras and a Post Graduate Diploma in Film Direction from the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune. She began her professional career assisting *avant garde* film-maker Mani Kaul, and since then has been working across platforms and genres making short fiction, feature length non-fiction and installation works, receiving commissions from the Government of India as well as other International Institutions. Her work continues to be shown Internationally and she has officiated on International selection committees and competition juries of film.

Stefan Rusu is an artist and curator currently based in Kyrgyzstan. In his curatorial practice he particularly focuses on collaboration with remote regions and countries from Central Asia (Tajikistan) and Asia (Mongolia).

Vasanthi Mariadass is a faculty at Srishti Institute of Art Design Technology. Her doctoral work on Jean-Luc Godard was from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She teaches and researches on experimental films and visual essays through postmodern and poststructural frameworks.

Wilfried Acgricola de Cologne is a media artist, creator of experimental films and videos and new media curator living and working in Cologne/Germany. He is the founding director of "The New Museum of Networked Art" (2000) and artvideoKOELN (2005) - the international platform for art & moving images running also the CologneOFF International Festival Network. He realised a wide range of artistic and curatorial projects in collaboration with festivals and cultural institutions all over the world.