

AHMET ÖĞÜT

b. 1981, Diyarbakır; lives and works in Istanbul, Amsterdam and Berlin

Jump Up!, 2022

Audience activated trampolines installed with Benodebehari Mukherjee's works from the Kiran Nadar Museum of Art Collection hung above eye-level

Exhibited with the support of SAHA

Audiences encounter works by the Indian modernist master Benodebehari Mukherjee that were created in the final years of his life, after he had gone blind. Rather than being hung at eye-level, the artist Ahmet Öğüt placed these works above eye-level - just outside of reach to fully take in - even with functional eyesight. Museums and galleries assume an average height of a viewer to determine how they hang things, making many works out of viewing range for children, people in wheelchairs, etc. The way that Öğüt chose to hang these works of art contributes to a sense of a distorted horizon in the room, which refers not only to the balance shifted during the earth's displacement, but also to

the disturbances that result from political shifts and their interconnections. Viewers become performers while their history-related memories that they collectively experience through their own physical experience is activated in a jump.

Öğüt is a sociocultural initiator, artist, and lecturer. Working across a variety of media, including photography, video, and installation, the artist often uses humor and small gestures to offer his commentary on serious and/or pressing social and political issues. Öğüt is regularly collaborating with people from outside of the art world to create shifts in collective perception of society.

DAVID HORVITZ

b. 1982, Los Angeles; lives and works in Los Angeles

Change the Name of Days, 2021/2023

Poster Edition of Artist Book

Published by Jean Boîte
Éditions & Yvon Lambert

Seventeen prompts to imagine the world differently pop up across the museum – on the glass facades, windows, restrooms, near the escalator and many unexpected places in the mall. These prompts are a selection from thirty-two lessons and short teaching units developed by David Horvitz, an artist and a father, with the help of his then 5-year-old daughter, originally published in an artist book entitled *Change the Name of the Days*. Each prompt provides DAS visitors with an opportunity to develop performative actions, and to build new personal collections of poetic instruments and thoughts. From instructions such as "welcome the night into your house" to "exchange breaths with a plant,"

this artistic intervention invites reflection on the immateriality of the world surrounding us, unlearning what we know and have been taught and, instead, learning something else, something new. We invite all museum visitors to choose any prompt and perform.

Performance, the idea of the game, and exchange with the public are central to Horvitz's practice. The concept of time in relation to the body and to paired relationships, is found in most of his work, spanning art books, photography, performance art, and mail art as well as new media, often exploring the relationship between man-made systems and natural phenomena.

ADE DIANITA AND ADITYA NOVALI

Ade Dianita b. 1986, Surakarta; lives and works in Surakarta

Aditya Novali b. 1978, Surakarta; lives and works in Surakarta

Significant Other, 2022-2023

Interactive installation with drawings on canvas, overhead projectors, and transparencies

Commissioned by Kiran Nadar Museum of Art and Samdani Art Foundation with the support of Roh projects

Ade Dianita and Aditya Novali's *Significant Other* is the newest iteration of an ongoing project inspired by the exchange between two artists, a sister and a brother. Ade is the younger sister of Aditya and lives with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as well as Down's Syndrome, which impacts how she communicates and interacts socially with her family and wider society. Ade is a full-grown woman with the mental age of a 5-year-old and, through the development of their lifelong relationship, Aditya observed that Ade finds comfort in obsessively making drawings on a daily basis at home, drawings which bear a strikingly similar visual language and orderliness to his own abstract compositions exhibited at museums and galleries around the world. This work expresses a certain communication and bond between the two in a way that goes beyond words and intellect, a deep connection between siblings.

This site-specific installation brings the brother and sister pair together where Ade's drawings, translated into overhead transparencies, are projected over Aditya's 365 permutations of identical-sized canvases containing complex abstractions that are almost

counterintuitively based on the way both Ade and Aditya were taught to draw in school, following the most basic structures of colonial-influenced Mooi Indie paintings—the sun, two mountains, and paddy fields. The images represented on each panel recall a time in Aditya's childhood that thereafter informs the current mental state of Ade, who in the (mis)perception of society, will forever be a child. Occupying the walls of an enclosed space, these canvases are interpolated with scans of Ade's drawings printed on transparent paper, which are projected upon the canvases through a number of overhead projectors, establishing a contextual interrelationship between the works of both Ade and Aditya Novali.

Novali makes sculptures and installations using complex methods of production as well as commercial materials. Influenced by his background in architecture, his work addresses themes such as structure, space, and urban planning. Using audience participation, Novali's works act as investigations of social issues related to space with the help of methodological techniques and orderly systems.

AFRA EISMA

b.1993 the Hague; lives and works in the Hague

Poke Press Squeeze Clasp, 2021-23

Yarn, ceramics and textiles

Organized with the support of Mondriaan Funds and Kunstinstituut Melly with curatorial contributions of Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy and Rosa de Graaf

Courtesy of the artist and No Man's Art Gallery

Drawing on literature by influential female authors from across cultures such as Begum Rokeya, Audre Lorde and Ursula K. Le Guin, Eisma interweaves characters from her imagination with ideas provoked by the work of the writers that she reads. Eisma creates a welcoming and lively gathering space where we can intertwine our limbs with those of the otherworldly and alien beings, taking delight in physical proximity, assembly, and embrace, core elements to our human experience. Gathered around a floor tapestry, these figures invite us to become entangled in their embrace and engage in conversation with their worlds and the worlds of other

visitors, and to imagine new worlds altogether.

Responding to an increasing experience of uneasiness, isolation, and uncertainty towards anything deemed extraneous to our familial environment, Eisma seeks to appease these maladies by fostering mutual understanding and shared experience through art. Using craft techniques in novel ways, Eisma explores and manifests personal stories through immersive and intimate installations of textiles, sculptures, and ceramics. Inspiring her works are characters or imaginary friends that interweave sensuality with lightheartedness.

AFRAH SHAFIQ

b. 1989, Bangalore; lives and works in Goa

Nobody Knows for Certain, 2021-2022

Interactive Fiction and Archival Game

This project was created with the support of the Garage Field Research program of Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow for the Garage Digital platform

Research, Script, Animation and Art:

Afrah Shafiq

Lead Programmer:

Kushal Neil

Lead Animator:

Piyush Verma

Additional Animation:

Eeshani Mitra

Original Score and Music Production:

Rushad Mistry and Zohran Miranda

Sound Design and Game Audio Implementation:

Horacio Valdiveso

Project curators:

Iaroslav Volovod and Valentin Diaconov

Garage Field Research team:

Oxana Polyakova, Daria Bobrenko and Ivan Yarygin

Nobody Knows for Certain is an online narrative video game and an invitation to submerge oneself in a sea of stories. The project's point of departure was an artistic inquiry into cultural exchange between the USSR and South Asia during the Cold War, and particularly into the phenomenon of Soviet children's books translated into major Indian languages. Decades of intense Soviet diplomacy between South Asia and the USSR in the postwar period have led to the formation of a common space where culture was shared by South Asian and Soviet peoples— translated literature, bilateral film distribution, tours by ballet companies and circus troupes saturated the collective imagination and offered mutual insights for people living in a vast geographical expanse stretching "from the Volga to the Ganges" (to borrow from the title of Rahul Sankrityayan's collection of historical fiction short stories.)

In particular, Slavic fairytales and Soviet stories formed a significant part of the childhood memories of those who grew up in the Indian subcontinent from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. Today, in a number of South Asian countries, there is a thriving subculture of collectors of these now out-of-print books, holding onto a childhood nostalgia and a deep affection for a nation that was never theirs and which no longer exists.

Going beyond the imagery associated with Communist propaganda, Shafiq draws from a variety of sources such as Eastern Slavic mythology and folk traditions, book illustrations, children's letters to editors, sound archives, lacquer miniatures, textiles, and decorative arts. She melds these characters, fragments, and disjointed elements to make an interactive game. The unique blended narrative is enriched with the presence of original characters invented by the artist such as a cat without a tail and a matryoshka doll who is empty inside. Tapping into the emancipatory potential of a storytelling unloosed, Shafiq critically revisits the morphology of the folk tale and brings essential philosophical and political updates into the narrative, inviting audiences to dive into, play, make choices, and explore.

Shafiq adapts the process of research as an artistic playground. She intertwines archival findings, history, memory, folklore, and fantasy to create a speculative world born of remixed cultures. Her work moves across various mediums, drawing from the handmade language of traditional folk forms and connecting them to the digital language of the Internet and video games. When she is not glued to her computer, she makes glass mosaics.

AMITAV GHOSH, SALMAN TOOR, AND ALI SETHI

Amitav Ghosh b. 1956, Kolkata; lives and works in New York

Salman Toor b. 1983, Lahore; lives and works in New York

Ali Sethi b. 1984, Lahore; lives and works in New York

Jungle Nama, 2021

A book and audiobook
imagined as an installation
with scenography by GOLEM,
2023

Courtesy of artists and Harper
Collins India

GOLEM design team:
Ariel Claudet and Sara Layoun

They say when you retell a story or listen to one, new voices come to haunt and change the narrative.

The Sundarbans—where story, myth and reality meet—earned its name from the Sundari tree, and is the planet's largest delta and mangrove forest. It spreads across the western coast of Bangladesh and the southern shore of West Bengal in India. The Bengali story-in-verse of the guardian of this forest is the legend of Bon Bibi and her fight with Dakshin Rai, a spirit who appears as a tiger to the natives. It is popular in the villages of the Sundarbans and often enacted in Pala or *Jatragaan* (local epic storytelling performances), and it erases religious boundaries between Hindus and Muslims as both venerate the forest and its goddess. The Sundari trees are known for their high-value wood and are at the brink of extinction.

Jungle Nama, an adaptation of one episode of the legend by author Amitav Ghosh, was published in book form with illustrations by artist Salman Toor, and narrated by musician Ali Sethi. The verse is an allegorical exploration of human greed, ecological escapades, the relationship of a people with their forest and the resources around them, together resulting in the real crisis of climate change. Ghosh's English-language, interpretation is told entirely in the *poyar*-like meter of twenty-four syllable couplets replicating the cadence of the original Bengali version. Within the story, the rhyme and meter of speaking out the words has a spell-like effect of invoking the goddess.

This sound and visual installation reimagine the book as an immersive space for KNMA visitors to access the world of mangroves, wetlands, alligators, the mighty spirit of Dakshin Rai, the avaricious rich merchant Dhona, the poor lad Dukhey. Salman Toor's black and white drawings are haunting images that travel with you, along with pairs of eyes of creatures and beings, gleaming through the darkness of the mangroves.

Amitav Ghosh is an award-winning author of historical fiction and non-fiction books that address colonialism and climate change, particularly how they affect the people of South Asia. Salman Toor is a painter known for his small-scale figurative works that combine academic technique and a quick, sketch-like style. Recurring color palettes and references to art history heighten the emotional impact of Toor's paintings and add a fantastical element to his narratives drawn from lived experience, as well as the imagined lives of young, queer brown men residing between New York City and South Asia. Ali Sethi is a singer, songwriter, composer, and author noted for his ability to blend Hindustani classical ragas with contemporary Western arrangements, combining live musical performances with historical narratives, cultural context, and critical commentary. Together, these collaborators have brought words, sounds, and images together to evoke a story experienced in public space, with scenography by GOLEM, an international architecture, art, and design studio based in Paris.

ANPU VARKEY

b. 1980, Bangalore; lives and works in Bangalore

Summer's Children, 2017-19

Selected drawings from the set
of 92 works made for the
graphic novel

Felt tip pen and brush pen
on paper

Collection: Kiran Nadar
Museum of Art

Set inside a rubber plantation in Kerala, *Summer's Children* resides in the memory of a lost place and childhood seen through the eyes of two siblings as they traverse the day. Both run across the field, through ant trails, and rubber trees. They run to the river and to the rain, curious and observant, and looking alike. They pick leaves, wander into thickets, chase animals, swim and catch fish in the village pond, crane their necks to look up to the sky, trees, and adults. Dot by dot, episodic memory, plays, sounds and landscape of childhood come to touch and visit us. Childhood here is a new place of observation and inquiry, of nostalgia, smells, and stories. Made for a self-published artist book, reading these monochromatic drawings is to attune yourself to a slow, joyful, sensorial looking and passing of a day where many delicate, minor

events happen around us.

Up on the tree, a nutmeg pod pops. A jackfruit falls on the ground. Fire ants make a leaf-house on guava trees. Varkey took two years to complete this silent graphic novel, which is partly autobiographical and based on time spent in her grandmother's ancestral village in rural Kerala. With each drawing, she creates a space she didn't know she inhabited or still carries within her.

Known for distinct graffiti and public murals in different cities of India, Anpu Varkey's practice pulses with attitude: unapologetic, experimental, and not afraid to share her vulnerabilities. Over the years, she has contributed immensely to the vibrant growing street art scene in India. Graphic novels and bookmaking are another aspect of her practice.

BLAISE JOSEPH, ATREYEE DAY AND NEW EDUCATION GROUP - FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATIVE RESEARCH IN EDUCATION (NEG-FIRE)

Multilingual Education Material - Books & Charts in Indigenous Languages, 2014 – 2015

Books in indigenous
languages of Konda Dhoras,
Kui and Adivasi Odia, Baigani,
Poraja and Gadaba

Inside the Belly of the Strange, oral traditions playfully meet pedagogy via the book-form and large wordless picture charts about seasons, rural ecology, and rituals. With the intention of rethinking what 'resource' in education means, particularly for children belonging to indigenous communities whose access to books is always in not-their-own-spoken-language, a group of artist-educators, and grassroots organizations like NEG-FIRE came together to develop and publish stories and poems for children in their mother tongues. They worked with tribal elders, government schools, primary teachers, drop-out youth, as well as students and program animators to make books that attempt to honor the spoken differences in each dialect and retain the earthiness of language of daily use, rather than a codified grammar-bound singular language. Blaise Joseph and Atreyee Day present a cross-section from the set of nineteen books and seven charts they developed in collaboration with communities of Araku (Andhra Pradesh) and Koraput (Odisha). These multi-use materials cover a range of everyday encounters and stories that are centuries old while simultaneously matching the current realities of the inhabitants speaking the language— ranging from a good hunt story, evocations of the beauty of changing seasons, village festivals, and community celebrations, daily chores and routines at home/school/field/forest, to personal joys, losses of children, and animal-human encounters.

Very Small Feelings exhibition and its expanded platform— Transnational Folklore Research Forum—intends a slow reflection of the collaborative spirit and journey of this multilingual book project, and a process of writing and illustrating that is not antithetical to the power of the oral but rather a fluid tool to connect and create conversation.

Process:

In 2014, Blaise Joseph and Atreyee Day were invited as art facilitators and consultants to the Bhopal Chapter of NEG-FIRE, with whom they had led community workshops on art and education since 2009 with the Bhil, Gond and Biaga tribes in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in Central India. Atreyee and Blaise approached indigenous communities via the workshop model to work with over a hundred participants from six tribal groups from the Araku and Koraput area. The first step was listening and gathering narratives and songs, local folklore, including versions important to each community. The next step progressed to editing, visualizing, and storyboarding, transcribing, loosely translating, making rough drafts, cut-outs and collaging – again with the involvement of children and community members – in Telugu, Odia, Gadaba, Paraja, Adibasi/ Desiya Odia, Kondadora, and Kui. This process helped the participants in this experiment reclaim their personal voices in retelling their brief human tales with humor and lightness. The freedom to express becomes the primary motivation, overcoming one's oppressive situation or life condition.

Blaise Joseph is an artist, art educator, and a farmer. He has been facilitating art workshops, community-based projects, and developing art-based curricula for educational institutions and various social organizations for the past 12 years. He has led the Kochi Biennale Foundation's Art By Children Programme since 2018. Atreyee Day is an artist educator and illustrator who draws for and publishes with independent alternate publishers in India. She was part of a small school where art was the main medium of instruction, and taught in semi-rural towns in the foothills of the Himalayas. She led collaborative workshops with Blaise on art pedagogy from 2012 to 2018.

BENODEBEHARI MUKHERJEE

b. 1904, Behala; d. 1980, New Delhi

Collages, 1957 – late 1960s

Graphite, colored paper, newspaper and jute thread, pasted on paper

Collection: Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

'A man who has the power of sight need not be told what light is. And where there is light there is color.' - Benodebehari Mukherjee

The sensory agility of these colorful collages draws one into the vision fields of Benodebehari Mukherjee. Made after he lost his vision at the age of 53, each collage was his attempt at re-constructing the world as he remembered it, re-building a visual language after a descent into complete blindness that he described as a "new feeling, new experience, and a new state of being." Drawing from memory, sensing colors and textures, he pieced together scenes from the rural topography of Santiniketan, experiences of Jatra performances (a folk theater form of Bengal) and, responding to his environment and everyday stimuli, he created tactile surfaces with different materials like jute thread, newspaper, and smooth colored paper. With a child-like curiosity and playfulness, his inspiring daily practice of making and thinking visually, framed and re-framed the figure and its surroundings. Like the animated body of *the Boy with Shell Nose*,

we see the fullness of the artist and what he was touching, feeling and imagining, an invitation for us to join in the act of sensing the artist's world as well as our own worlds.

An important modernist figure of pre-Independent India, Mukherjee was one of the earliest artists in modern India to use murals as a mode of artistic expression. He studied at Kala Bhavana, Santiniketan in 1919, with Nandalal Bose and Rabindranath Tagore as his teachers, later becoming an art teacher there himself in 1925 and spending his most creative phase in Santiniketan until 1949. Like many of his peers, he was influenced by art from East Asia, and visited China and Japan between 1936-37 to learn different brush and ink techniques. In 1948, he traveled to Nepal as the Curator of the Nepal Government Museum, Kathmandu, and also spent several years in Mussorie and Dehradun training artist-teachers. As a pedagogue, he has influenced generations of students in Santiniketan and wrote critical and insightful reflections on pedagogy and arts education.

CHITTAPROSAD

b. 1904, Behala; d. 1980, New Delhi

Angels Without Fairy Tales, 1952

Linocut on paper

Collection: DAG Modern and Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Chittaprosad's humanism makes us actors and witnesses to his questioning of unequal social relationships and ideas of progress in post-independent India. His figure of the child-worker undercuts the glorious image of childhood innocence. *Angels Without Fairy Tales* is an important linocut series that he first made in 1952, and later published by Danish UNICEF committee and dedicated it to the *International Conference in Defence of Children*. These tales of lost childhood highlight the atrocity of the daily labor of children from poor families or those orphaned and forced to share age-inappropriate responsibilities with adults. They speak of survival, deprivation, child abuse and premature adulthood: a boy-performer on the streets with a monkey, a kid with his box of shoe polish asleep on the pavement, a child rowing a boat to earn a living, another engaged in hard domestic chores of adults.

Throughout his life, Chittaprosad remained an advocate of children's rights. During his historically seminal reportage of the Bengal Famine of 1943, he documented the plight of children suffering from acute starvation, abandonment, abuse, and separation from family members, becoming beggars in order to survive. He visited orphanages that opened during the famine and reported on the conditions of children and the lack of medical supplies and relief for them. In his brush and ink famine drawings, he provocatively uses the gaze of famine-affected children with bloated stomachs, exhausted faces, malnourished bodies marked with wounds and disease to agitate the viewer into feeling empathy and taking action.

Tell Me a Story Please!, 1960s **Illustrations Made for Children's Books, 1960s** **Kingdom of Rasagolla, Bengali Folktales Retold and Illustrated by Chittaprosad** **The Little Mermaid, Nov 27, 1968** **The Angel, Nov 28, 1968** **Holger and Dane, 1960s**

Linocut on paper

Collection: DAG Modern and Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Very Small Feelings exhibition literally and conceptually follows Chittaprosad's prompt to "Tell me a story!"—inviting its artists and visitors to find spaces to tell, retell and listen to stories that are crucial to them. Chittaprosad created joyous and playful illustrations and prints for children's books picturing a utopian and animated world of birds and animals, a stark contrast to his grim depictions of the 'real world' through images of child labor also present in the exhibition. Known for his socialist conviction, political fervor, and agitation, after his disassociation from the Communist Party in 1949, Chittaprosad spent most of his time in Bombay, expressing himself mostly in the medium of prints as well as making and experimenting with puppets and puppet theater. In *Khelaghar* (Playhouse), he wrote, directed, and designed costumes for plays and comedy shows for children of the informal settlements around his Andheri residence, which witnesses describe as being full of hope and laughter. Whether working with Bengali folk tales or the stories of famous western authors like Hans Christian Andersen, Chittaprosad's illustrations were designed and approached with a folk-like simplicity, carrying the rhythm of nursery rhymes, while weaving in aspects of village life to evoke immediate familiarity and intimacy.

Chittaprosad was a radical artist from undivided Bengal, who spent his early years in Chattagram, Bangladesh, formerly known as Chittagong. He was greatly inspired by the Chittagong Uprising of the 1930s. His visual accounts of death, illness, poverty, and strife in pre-independent India remain relevant even today. His iconic sketches of famine-stricken children, families, and dispensaries from the Bengal Famine series (1944-45) became eye-witness accounts disseminated through communist newspapers. He was a member of the undivided Communist Party of India until 1949 and contributed immensely to its cultural wing which involved many iconic writers, poets and artists.

DRILANT ZENELI

b. 1983, Shkoder; lives and works in Turin

No wise fish would escape without flying, 2019

HD Video, color, sound, 07'10"

How deep can a dragonfly swim under the ocean?, 2021

4K film, color, sound, 12'23"

The firefly keeps falling and the snake keeps growing, 2022

Color, sound, 11'46"

Courtesy of the artist and Giorgio Persano Gallery

In this trilogy of films, Zeneli harnesses a narrative structure, following the model of the contemporary fairytale, to amplify human feelings such as fear, failure, isolation, and envy. These internal feelings impact how humans form the external world through politics and architecture. The chapters are developed and filmed in iconic architectural spaces of Brutalist origin in three capitals of the Balkan Peninsula: The National Library in Prishtina, Republic of Kosovo, The Pyramid in Tirana, Albania, and the Post Office in Skopje, North Macedonia.

In the first film, a fish is trapped in a net, part of the architecture of the façade of the National Library of Kosovo, trying to escape from a shark. A group of children who worked with the non-profit institution Bonevet—which considers technology as a method to learn science, understand life, and increase imagination—played a game with Zeneli to imagine a solution to release the fish from the net to escape the shark. Together, they composed a narrative that portrays the Brutalist architecture of the National Library as something transformable into malleable matter, and the nature of the fish as being like a bird that can float in the sky. The film offers us a story where the art of being wise is entrusted to children and the architecture of the National Library in Kosovo becomes a network of possibilities which are there for all of us to imagine.

The second film tells the story of a dragonfly that, despite being able to move its wings, is condemned to never fly, thus failing to get away from the ocean. The dragonfly, a symbol of spiritual depth, power, change of perspective, and

adaptation recalls the real experience of Rilond Risto, who spent 21 years of isolation in Albanian prisons, creating mechanical insects capable of flight from various circumstantial tools during his last period of imprisonment. The dragonfly moves inside the Pyramid of Tirana, a memorial monument to the Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha built in late 1980s, and is held by it without the possibility to fly and escape from the Pyramid, a metaphor for the existential quest to escape the confines of externally imposed rules.

The third film is set in the Post Office of Skopje, Macedonia, whose concrete structure, modeled in the shape of a lotus flower and completed in 1974, became the symbol of the reconstruction of the city after the devastating earthquake of 1963. The film is inspired by the fairytale of the firefly and the snake in which the snake, struck by the brightness of the firefly, tries at all costs to eat it, and reacts to that feeling of powerlessness in front of its bright glow—an allegory for the senseless, often ego-driven violence we experience in the world today.

Zeneli's work challenges physical and intellectual limits by staging and performing ironic and dreamlike situations, which are often absurd. His performative approach makes us question how we experience time and identify with dreams, playing with reason while utilizing the wider public's participation in the creation of his work. At the core of Zeneli's performative actions, as well his films, is the redefinition of ideas of failure, utopia, and dream that open up possible alternative readings of the world.

GANESH PYNE

b.1937, Calcutta; d. 2013, Kolkata

10 Illustrations from Shataborsher Roopkatha/Hundred Years of Fairy Tales, 1983

Saat Bhai Champa
Rajkumari Poncho Pushpa
Mone Mone
Maniraj
Ramdhanur Golpo
Chandrachur Rajputra
Pori-r-Golpo
Buro Angul
Kheede
Untitled

Pen and ink on paper

Collection: Kiran Nadar
Museum of Art

Artists, storytellers and puppeteers:

Shumi Rani, Tithi Rani,
Champa Rani, Asha Rani,
Ruposhi Rani, Shantona Rani,
Tithi Rani, Shahnaj Parvin,
Shunil Barman, Noyon Barman,
Apon Barman, Omol Barman,
Srabanti Rani, Krishno Das,
Sruti Rani, Shuvo Barman,
Ovi Barman, Apurba Barman,
Akalu Barman, Amal Tudu,
Rajkumar Barman, Shudhir Das,
Noyon Kishore Ray, Puja Rani

Most of the team members are
10 to 15-years-old, and reside
in Thakurgaon, Bangladesh

Well-known as the master of
tempera technique, Ganesh Pyne's
painterly world full of dreamscapes,
mysterious figures, and motifs
emerges from the fairytales of
Thakurmar Jhuli and similar sources.

* Pyne's childhood was spent in a
crumbling mansion in Calcutta
(present-day Kolkata), listening to
his grandmother's make-believe
world of fairytales, folklore, and
mythical stories from epics and
witnessing *jatra* performances that
sparked his imagination. He
passionately drew animated
illustrations and picture books for
young children, a strong aspect of
his practice which is only now
gaining art-historical attention. He
worked in an animation studio as an
illustrator for almost two decades.
His inclination for drawing and
re-drawing figures from popular
stories and mythology, rendering
them into philosophical and
vulnerable caveats, comes across in
this unique suite of illustrations.
These drawings were made for an
anthology celebrating fairytales by
iconic Bengali writers, from Sukumar
Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar,
and many others. Each illustration
captures a poetic moment from
the tales: the lonely woman at the
window in *Kheede*, the queen
nursing the ill in *Rajkumari Poncho
Pushpa*, the prince smelling the

flowers *Mone Mone*, or the king
encountering seven of his children
who turned into *champa* flowers in
Saat Bhai Champa.

By creating visual parables, Pyne
creates spaces for the reader to
enter the stories and build their own
joy, grief, and intimacy with these
timeless tales. His larger body of
work reflects upon the magical,
mysterious world which is poetic
and equally full of fear, death,
darkness, and the unknown. As
fellow artist Paritosh Sen beautifully
observes, Pyne's world is "where
feeling becomes more important
than seeing."

**Thakumar Jhuli* (1907) was one of
the earliest published collections of
indigenous Bengali folk and
fairytales, edited and compiled by
Dakhinaranjan Mitra Majumdar. It
was one of the earliest attempts to
document and publish the
indigenous folklore of Bengal to
reclaim the space encroached upon
by the rise of popular English
fairy tale books. Dakhinaranjan
traveled across many villages
recording verbal narrations of the
folktales with his phonograph, and
later edited and published them in
several books.

GI DREE BAWLEE FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS

Bonna, 2022

Video, loop

Duration: 5 minutes

Commissioned by Samdani
Art Foundation, Kiran Nadar
Museum of Art and World
Weather Network

Bangladesh is a place where girls named Bonna live, play, and grow with living and non-living beings of every gender orientation. Bonna literally translates to flood, but not all floods are bad. Many storms are named after people but, here, a person is named after a weather pattern. Bonna is a free spirit, and she brings chaos to the world. Sometimes chaos enables new possibilities to emerge as it breaks apart rigid structures. Violent destructive flooding in Bangladesh and other South Asian countries, due to climate change and man-made structures, is now a pressing concern and we can learn from stories that have been floating around for thousands of years in this land of rivers.

The Bonna character encountered in this video was imagined by a group

of children in Bangladesh whose community elders are climate migrants, many of whom have never left Bangladesh, but who acutely feel the impact of the world's carbon emissions while contributing very little to them. The children's lives are intertwined with the community elders and their journeys of environmental migration to Thakurgaon, Bangladesh. They wrote the script for this video work interpreting the theme of the 2023 Dhaka Art Summit, re-contextualizing what it means to live with extreme weather. As a conceptual carryover from the Dhaka Art Summit 2023, Bonna joins many other characters that activate and anchor Very Small Feelings exhibition.

Artists, storytellers and puppeteers:

Shumi Rani, Tithi Rani, Champa Rani, Asha Rani, Ruposhi Rani, Shantona Rani, Tithi Rani, Shahnaj Parvin, Shunil Barman, Noyon Barman, Apon Barman, Omol Barman, Puja Rani, Srabanti Rani, Sruti Rani, Shuvo Barman, Ovi Barman, Apurba Barman, Akalu Barman, Rajkumar Barman, Amal Tudu, Shudhir Das, Krishno Das, Noyon Kishore Ray

Most of the team members are 10 to 15-years-old, and reside in Thakurgaon, Bangladesh

HAZALEH AVARZAMANI

b.1980, Tehran; lives and works between Toronto and Margate

Stuck-in-time Time Wall, 2022-2023

Soap installation

Commissioned by Kiran Nadar
Museum of Art and Samdani
Art Foundation.

Project supported by Canada
Council for the Arts.

Stuck-in-time Time Wall uses soap as a tool for both agency and discomfort. Exploring the political and domestic associations of soap as a material turned art object, this project examines the politics of education, the process of colonizing the mind and cleaning the body. It is triggered by the Point Four Program, a colonial post-war educational program to help developing nations "help themselves." In 1949, as part of Cold War policies to combat the influence of the USSR, the Truman administration came up with the idea for a technical assistance program as a means to win the "hearts and minds" of countries "in the developing world," sharing American know-how in various fields, especially agriculture, industry, and health. This program introduced a variety of materials, machines, and ideas through documentaries etc. Avarzamani's intervention responds to the propaganda of the program and offers ever-changing blocks of soap as a quiet meditation on the human condition. The soaps were

sourced from Cosco, one of the oldest soap-making companies in Bangladesh, and the production of this project was realized in collaboration with the organization TransEnd which supports the diverse transgender, non-binary and queer community in Bangladesh, and with further support from the team in India.

Avarzamani's practice is committed to challenging hegemonic and epistemological structures by investigating the rules and methodologies used to shape power in society. Grounded in ideas of deconstruction, replication, and transformation, her research examines how education shapes psychosocial constructions of knowledge and cultural practices. Primarily working in sculpture and installation, she often explores games and play as tools to understand power dynamics and systems that are inherent but often hidden within our shared relationships.

GUAM BUS

The Guam Bus is run by brothers Michael and Jack Lujan Bevacqua from the Kabesa and Bittot clans of Guam. When both were children growing up in the 1980s and 1990s in Guam, there was very little media related to being Chamoru, or telling the stories of their people and teaching them their language. In 2015, after Michael had become a university professor and teacher of Chamoru and Jack had started a career as an artist, they decided to use their talents to create books, flashcards, comics, and games telling Chamoru stories and teaching the Chamoru language. Their initial inspiration was to create for Chamoru children today resources reflecting their heritage. To date, they have

published three bilingual Chamoru-English children's books, three comic books, produced three sets of flashcards for young learners of Chamoru, and released a Chamoru language bingo game in 2021.

Today, the mission of the Guam Bus is to revitalize the Chamoru language and empower the Chamoru people. They aim to do this primarily through the production of creative and academic works designed to inspire and educate the Chamoru people about their heritage and future possibilities as a people.

HA BIK CHUEN

b. 1925, Xinhui; d. 2009, Hong Kong

Selected images of children's work From Ha Bik Chuen's Archive and Contact Sheets, 1990s

Mediated by Lokesh Khodke, 2023

Courtesy Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong

This delightful ensemble of children's artworks from exhibitions in the 1990s in Hong Kong highlights a rich culture of children's exhibitions in public spaces. From responding to a particular prompt by a teacher or a theme, to drawing and imagining life around them, these wondrous and expressive images are for the eye, heart, and mind. With this cross-section from Ha Bik Chuen's archive at *Very Small Feelings*, we navigate the world of children's culture, the visibility of children's artworks in public cultural institutions, and young learners as active participants of an arts scene, historically and today.

Famous for his sculpture and printmaking, Hong Kong artist Ha Bik Chuen had a parallel practice of photographing exhibitions he attended while collecting materials for the construction of his book collages. At *Very Small Feelings*, we are enthralled by Ha Bik Chuen's earnest documentation of children's art and exhibitions, and this aspect of his archive opens up the important question of the role of children in art history and contemporary arts.

From the exhibitions:

Beijing children painting exhibition (1990)

Children's Paintings on Protecting the Environment (1991)

Ink paintings (1991)

Children's Chinese Painting Exhibition (1992)

Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Taiwan Children's Monkey Painting Exhibition (1992)

Children's art and craft (1993) English school children's works (1993)

Childlike Children's Painting '95 Cultural Centre (1995)

World children's paintings (1998)

SELECTED IMAGES OF CHILDREN'S WORK FROM HA BIK CHUEN'S ARCHIVE AND CONTACT SHEETS, 1990S

b. 1925, Xinhui; d. 2009, Hong Kong

Mediated by Lokesh Khodke,
2023

Courtesy Asia Art Archive,
Hong Kong

This delightful ensemble of children's artworks from exhibitions in the 1990s in Hong Kong highlights a rich culture of children's exhibitions in public spaces. From responding to a particular prompt by a teacher or a theme, to drawing and imagining life around them, these wondrous and expressive images are for the eye, heart, and mind. With this cross-section from Ha Bik Chuen's archive at *Very Small Feelings*, we navigate the world of children's culture, the visibility of children's artworks in public cultural institutions, and young learners as active participants of an arts scene, historically and today.

Famous for his sculpture and printmaking, Hong Kong artist Ha Bik Chuen had a parallel practice of photographing exhibitions he attended while collecting materials for the construction of his book collages. At *Very Small Feelings*, we are enthralled by Ha Bik Chuen's earnest documentation of children's art and exhibitions, and this aspect of his archive opens up the important question of the role of children in art history and contemporary arts.

From the exhibitions:

Beijing children painting exhibition (1990)

Children's Paintings on Protecting the Environment (1991)

Ink paintings (1991)

Children's Chinese Painting Exhibition (1992)

Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Taiwan Children's Monkey Painting Exhibition (1992)

Children's art and craft (1993) English school children's works (1993)

Childlike Children's Painting '95 Cultural Centre (1995)

World children's paintings (1998)

IRUSHI TENNEKON

b.1989, Sri Lanka; lives and works in Colombo and London

Animated Films

Studying Blue Whales, 2019

(featuring Asha de Vos,
Marine Biologist),
3 minutes

The Umbrella Thief, 2020

(featuring Sybil Wettasinghe,
Children's author and
illustrator),
3 minutes

Colombo Wetlands and the Urban Fishing Cat, 2022

(featuring Anya Ratnayaka),
6 minutes

Irushi Tennekon's ongoing series *Animate Her* interviews a group of exceptional women living and working in Sri Lanka, sharing their paths of work and life, to lay out alternatives to patriarchal structures created (primarily by men) for women to fall into. Through modes of stop-motion and experimental animation, the series brings to life the stories of a marine biologist, a children's author and illustrator, a wildlife conservationist, a lawyer and activist, a traditional dancer, an architect, and an ICT entrepreneur. Responding to the invisibility of working women in public spaces and the idea of future heroines and role models with brown skin and dark hair, Tennekon's heroines come from diverse fields in the arts,

sciences and technology who challenge the norms and biases of their fields. As they share their journeys, risks taken, challenges embraced, the larger social and environmental ecospheres that govern one's life choices become apparent, along with other topics including how Colombo wetlands prevent floods and disease.

Working as an artist, experimental animator, and storyteller, Tennekon strives to inspire more open-ended futures for women in Sri Lanka. While she has a background in English studies, her work seeks to bring visibility to heroines indigenous to Sri Lanka rather than imported from Euro-centric colonial traditions.

JANI RUSCICA

b. 1978 Savonlinna; Lives and works in Helsinki

Not-knot (to stain), 2023

Wood cut and mixed
printing techniques

The inked and their
Incandescent Irreverence
(New Delhi)
Site-specific mural, 2023

Commissioned by Samdani
Art Foundation and Kiran
Nadar Museum of Art with
support from the Finnish
Cultural Institute

Potentially familiar, yet only provisional, symbols, stretch, twist and contort themselves towards the very limits of recognition, extending themselves across the gallery space, almost holding it in an embrace. Like tattoos or graffiti on the skin of a building, appropriated linguistic signs start to take on human, animal, and plant-like qualities, seemingly performing for an audience as they turn and stretch. Refusing their intended meaning and gesturing towards new, freer ways of existing, through illegibility, fragmentation and incoherence, these signs and symbols playfully embody the slippery nature of language and its codifications.

Jani's site-specific mural playfully responds to the architectural spaces of the museum and other installed artworks in the exhibition.

Ruscica's work spans a variety of mediums, using not only video, sound, and performance, but also sculpture, murals, and woodcuts. Looking for common ground between different and seemingly disparate art forms, their practice explores the mutability of meaning, the ties and slippages between interpretation and representation, questioning categories and binaries, and playfully collapsing boundaries of language, animacy and meaning.

JESSY RAZAFIMANDIMBY

b. 1995, Madagascar; lives and works in Geneva

Si Seulement les souvenirs parvenaient du futur, 2022

Found object, bed sheet, pencil on paper

Courtesy of the artist and Sans Titre, Paris

Chants hirsutes, 2022

Found objects, woven straw, acrylic on bed sheet

Courtesy of the artist, private collection, Paris and Sans Titre, Paris

Presentation supported by Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia

Jessy Razafimandimby is interested in the stories behind objects and what they have to say about human behavior. He employs notions of the household as a metaphorical framework to question notions of taste, belonging, and power. An avid collector of domestic objects, his work has been described as an “archive of anecdotes,” where the rituals and traditions (of making) of their previous owners meet the personal history of the artist, coming alive in gestural, hybrid works that carry with them the artist’s childhood memories growing up Madagascar. Textiles are a common motif in the artist’s work; they link ornamental practices from paintings to bedsheets and play a role in concealing and revealing fictions and truths in theater and in life. These works are inspired by the artist’s childhood experience as an altar boy in Madagascar as well as his contemporary experience in Geneva. His mother continues to enact imported Christian rituals in her adopted home today when decorating altars for family ceremonies. The act of transmission fascinates the artist; many religious

ceremonies use white cloth as part of rituals to purify and seal commitments to higher spiritual powers and to other human beings, as in the act of marriage. Transmission is also part of our hope for transformation, and the artist interprets ritual objects in straw, a kind of alchemy where “poor materials” can become precious through the act of belief.

Razafimandimby’s multidisciplinary production encompasses painting, drawing, installations, and performance. Often, these practices converge, finding the artist manipulating fragmented decorative objects and textiles, which extend the work beyond its frame. These extensions reveal a clash between sculpture and painting, staged by the artist, as well as clashes of culture. He pays particular attention to the history of interior decoration and ornamentation, as well as social conventions of “good manners” that are traditionally linked to a conservative way of life and promoted by a classist bourgeois system.

JOYDEB ROAJA

b.1973, Khagrachari; lives and works in Khagrachari

Generation-wish-yielding trees and atomic tree, 2009-ongoing

Photo-drawing
collage print

Courtesy of the artist

Liquid roots, 2022

Pen and color pencil
on paper

Collection: Samdani Art
Foundation

Go Back to Roots 39, 2022

Go Back to Roots 43, 2022

Ink pen on paper

Collection: Kiran Nadar
Museum of Art

Belonging to the Tripura community from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Joydeb Roaja's childhood was not like that of most Bangladeshi artists. He grew up seeing army boot prints on the hills, and tanks haunted his dreams. Generation-wish-yielding trees is a response to his traumatic memories, a series which began as a performance with his daughter in 2009. His performances turned into drawings and his drawings turned into performances. These photo-drawing collage prints are mainly made from the desire to see performance documentation and drawings side-by-side as one work.

The only source of water in the hilly area of Roaja's village in Rangamati is a small stream running between two hills but, for the sake of development, the natural forest was cut down and re-planted with teak plantations. As a result, many

streams in the hilly areas are drying up. The stream Roaja used to bathe in as a child now has no water except during the rainy season. This is the reason why this jhiri (stream) in Liquid roots transforms into ever-running roots in his drawings, flowing with hope for more autonomous futures.

Roaja has an interconnected performance, painting, and drawing practice that highlights the challenging social and political landscape of Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts. His works are tied to the experiences of indigeneity, often emphasizing the deep and symbiotic connection of indigenous people with their land as well as the fight for recognition and rights. His work is an empowering call to demand autonomy and ensure preservation of minority cultures.

KABIR AHMED MASUM CHISTY

b. 1976, Narayanganj; lives and works in Dhaka, Bangladesh

The Story of Water and Labor Pain, 2022-2023

Charcoal and watercolor
on paper, performance

Collection: Samdani Art
Foundation

Commissioned by Kiran Nadar
Museum of Art and Samdani
Art Foundation

Through drawings and body movement, Kabir Ahmed Masum Chisty explores a story of the flood created at the confluence of the Padma and Brahmaputra rivers. People living on the banks of the hundreds of rivers in Bangladesh and India have always depended on the sediments that come with the river, traveling all the way from the Himalayas. Combining mythological events and characters from the region, Chisty created his own narrative of the delta and its natural phenomena of flooding.

Chisty works with performance, poetry, drawing, and animation. Based in Narayanganj and Dhaka, he explores through his art the depths of the human psyche. Often working through the intricate meshwork of the relationships between mind and body, body and matter, myth and reality, time and space, his practice attempts to install in everyday surroundings a window into imaginary spaces, dreamscapes, and parallel realities.

KELLY SINNAPHAH MARY

b. 1981, Guadeloupe; lives and works in Guadeloupe

Notebook 12: The Fables of Sanbras, 2022

Acrylic on paper

Commissioned by Samdani Art Foundation and Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Courtesy of the artist and Aicon Gallery

Notebook (2) of No Return, 2018

Acrylic on paper

From the Collection of Albertine Kopp

Through the lens of science fiction, Kelly Sinnapah Mary often explores the so-called feminine universe; working with floral themes, soft materials, and fairytales, she uses techniques contrasting with her poignant and politically charged subject matter. From this friction, Sinnapah Mary traces her ethnic heritage, while questioning her roots as someone caught in two nested worlds— confronting concepts of ‘negritude’ and ‘coolitude’. ‘Coolie’, an expression coined by Caribbean poet Khal Torabully, is a pejorative name given to Indians who migrated to the Caribbean. Sinnapah Mary invented a character named ‘Sanbras’, a young girl who perhaps stands in for the artist as a young girl, and tries to connect the past, present, and future as a protagonist with agency over her life’s direction. Sometimes she is a schoolgirl on the run who

takes a critical look at society and dreams of creating an alternative community with other children. She questions the relationship between human and animal, and thinks of the animal as an ally to build and remake the world she wants to live in the future.

Sinnapah Mary creates images through drawing, painting, sculpture, and tapestry-making that refer to the tales and biblical stories of her childhood, mixing cruelty and enchantment, while exploring postcolonial dilemmas and resistance to self-invention. She embraces her own ethnic heritage as a descendant of Indian indentured laborers, and draws in sexuality, a love of craft, and the social injustice she perceives around her to create mini-worlds with science fiction and fairytale undertones.

LAPDIANG SYIEM

b. 1988, Shillong; lives and works in Shillong

Laitiam, 2022-2023

Video, Loop, 15 minutes

Co-commissioned by Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, Samdani Art Foundation, Art Dubai, Goethe Institut, New Delhi and Jakarta

This body-based performance by Lapdiang Syiem, which visitors can experience as a video, explores the Khasi folktale U Sier Lapalang, a story of the stag who climbs up from the plains of what we know as present-day Bangladesh into the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya to find the wild herb U Jangew Jathang, only to be captured and killed by hunters. His mother also ascends in search of her son and encounters the kill. She releases a dirge, a lamentation which is said to be a sound that has taught the Khasi people how to mourn and grieve. The work focuses on memory and retelling, landscape, and grief as an emotion that drives the narrative of border-crossing and how it resonates in the Khasi community. Syiem's embodiment of the innocent and adventurous spirit of U Lapalang and his journey to the frontiers beyond his learned geography, speaks to us on multiple levels.

The performance-video made on site captures the landscape of Sohra, Sohbar (the village between Sohra and the Bangladesh border), and Wahrew (the river flowing between Meghalaya and Bangladesh) which are undergoing a process of tremendous change and erasure with aggressive urbanization, mining, and other interventions.

Syiem's practice is deeply physical, drawing on techniques from her diverse training in theatrical arts. She presents and revives indigenous Khasi folktales with a contemporary vision, engaging with questions of gender and identity. She locates her theatrical expression in her minority matrilineal community's oral traditions, using folk as a resource and performance as a form toward the expression of the oral—where the act of performing means taking part in the passage of those traditions from one generation to the next.

LOKESH KHODKE

b. 1979, Bhopal; lives and works in New Delhi

Selected pages from
Comic Series:

The Speaking Mountain, 2022-2023

With research inputs and
materials from Asia Art
Archive (AAA)

Co-commissioned by
Kiran Nadar Museum of Art,
Samdani Art Foundation
and AAA

Khodke's imaginative leaps into the archive and interest in storytelling is part of a cluster of works that explores different children's art practices, highlighting local art teachers' life-long work and institutional histories focused on children's arts and education.

Khodke shares selected pages from his ongoing fictional comic series conjuring, through the artist's use of humor, a rich ground for exploring different artistic practices and dialogues across geographies. He entangles Hong Kong, Bhopal, and the landscape of the children's literary world of comics from India in the 1990s with personal insights and episodes that pull in his own earliest memories of the art scene in his native city of Bhopal. The protagonist of the comic, a young boy from Bhopal, travels through time and space, meeting real and imagined characters. He meets artist Ha Bik Chuen in Hong Kong in the early 1990s, and also Nagraj and other popular characters from the comic worlds of India, Hong Kong, and America, traveling onward into the current moment. These encounters spark many ideas and questions in the young boy's imagination.

This comic series was developed from Khodke's online artist-educator research residency at Asia Art Archive in 2021, where he was

inspired by the photo contact sheets of children's artworks and exhibitions rigorously documented by the artist Ha Bik Chuen in Hong Kong in the 1990s. This visual research material led him to initiate conversations on comics, children, and art with artists Ronnie Wong Lai Keung and Professor Oscar Ho. He also met artist Vinay Sapre who taught and worked at Jawahar Bal Bhavan from the 1980s, teaching aeromodelling and art to children and young adults throughout his life. Engaging with the archival material and stitching his research with popular visual material like children's illustrated magazines, comics, films, news articles, Khodke connects many divergent threads, and plans to further develop the comic and continue his research on Bal Bhavans in India.

Khodke has been making illustrations for children's books and comics for almost two decades. As a practicing comic-book artist and educator in the visual arts, he co-founded Blue Jackal, a platform for creating and publishing visual narratives, comics, picture books and interactive tools and programs for learners of different ages. He is also co-founder and co-editor of Drawing Resistance, a Hindi/English zine reflecting on the current socio-political climate.

MATTHEW KRISHANU

b.1980, Bradford; lives and works in London

Mountain Lake, 2019

Oil on canvas

Collection: Kiran Nadar
Museum of Art

Safari, 2012

Oil and acrylic on canvas

Collection: Amrita Jhaveri

Forest Lake, 2019

Oil on canvas

Collection: Stuti and
Arjun Agarwal

"The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there," writes the British novelist LP Hartley, a line that inspires Matthew Krishanu's Another Country series which relates to how the artist sees memory's role in restructuring and re-imagining the past, his past, which he sees a physical space, unknown and elsewhere. He paints to tell stories that are at once familiar and strange, circling back to his own childhood in Bangladesh as the bi-racial son of Bengali and English Christian missionaries before moving back to England at the age of twelve. Krishanu frames his subjects, often featuring himself and his brother as young boys, in relation to the still-living legacy of European colonialism and how that relates to ideas about race, history, religion, and belonging.

According to the artist, having figures of brown children, such as these two, "on the walls of galleries around the world, is a response to the historical disempowerment of the brown figure, and of children, within western art." He paints in a nostalgic style, charged with childlike wonder, to access and revisit a whole set of emotions and atmospheres from his childhood that are still very much alive in him as an adult. This painting explores the relationship between two brothers via the body language between the older and the younger of the pair of siblings as they explore the landscape in Kashmir

(and elsewhere in Bengal in other works from the series). They have strength together as a unit, but also encounter their own power struggles between them. Rather than looking out at the landscape, they look at us, seeing us as part of their scene. He creates a nostalgic anxiousness that is shared by both the boys and us. Grazing through this adolescent innocence, Krishanu somehow empowers his viewers with empathy and an engagement that can also cause discomfort.

In Safari, which is set in Bangladesh, the two brown brothers are placed between an elephant in the distance and their towering white father figure in the foreground, equally alien to the landscape. Despondent, they seem unsure of who or what to aim their bows and arrows at. Krishanu's painting practice employs shallow pictorial depth and backgrounds that often veer into abstraction, creating paintings that seem to occupy a liminal zone. His paintings exist somewhere between the precision of a photograph and something looser. He works from his imagination, which he sketches and maps out as preparatory drawings, from photographs given to him from people familiar to these past scenes, and also from inspirations from the history of painting. This lack of specificity opens up a field "outside of time" and invites viewers to bring their own experience and readings into the work.

MONG MONG SHO

b.1989 Moheshkhali; lives and works in Dhaka and Kunming

Songs of The Fishermen's Children, 2022-2023

Ink on rice paper

Collection: Samdani Art Foundation

Co-commissioned by Kiran Nadar Museum of Art and Samdani Art Foundation

Childhood in Moheshkhali is strange. In many cases, children become child laborers to help their fathers and family members earn a living, losing their childhood in the process. They touch money before touching books. They live in conditions of which urban society can never dream. Their lives are intertwined with the fishermen's boats and the island on which they live. Songs of the Fishermen's Children depicts the lives of such children who work and live in Moheshkhali, an island in Cox's Bazar in southern Bangladesh.

Born in a Rakhine family, an ethnic group found in Myanmar, South Bangladesh and India, Sho also spent his childhood on the coastal island of Moheshkhali. The sea determines the island people's future professions. Some grow up to be fishermen, moneylenders, fishmongers, salt gators, tenders, brokers, laborers, boatmen, finding their destiny among hundreds of occupations around the sea. Mong Mong Sho became an artist, studied watercolor techniques in China, and currently makes art and teaches there.

SATYAJIT RAY

b. 1921, Calcutta; d. 1992, Calcutta

Two - A Film Fable/Parable of Two, 1964

Courtesy of the Academy
Awards Film Archive

Restored by the Satyajit
Ray Preservation Project at
the Academy Film Archive

This short film shows an encounter between a child of a rich family and a street child, observed through the rich child's window. The film was made without dialogue and displays attempts of one-upmanship between the children in their display of their toys. This film was part of a trilogy commissioned by PBS (American public television) and, rather than accept the proposal to create a film in English set in Bengal, the legendary filmmaker Satyajit Ray decided to pay homage to the genre of silent cinema. Dealing with themes like loneliness, industrialization, materialism, war, inequality, and mankind's thirst for power, this film, like many other works of Ray, could be read as

an allegory for the Vietnam War, speaking to how the impoverished farmers of Vietnam put up a brave fight against America as a bullying superpower.

Satyajit Ray was an Indian Bengali filmmaker, widely regarded as one of the greatest filmmakers of the 20th century. He was also a fiction writer, publisher, illustrator, calligrapher, music composer, graphic designer, and film critic, and authored several short stories and novels, primarily aimed at children and adolescents. His style of storytelling relied on emotions and humanism, connecting India to the world in new and nuanced ways.

YASMIN JAHAN NUPUR

b. 1979, Chittagong; lives and works in Dhaka.

Home, 2022-2023

Participatory performance

Commissioned by Kiran Nadar Museum of Art and Samdani Art Foundation with the support of Bagri Foundation

Lead performers:
Yasmin Jahan Nupur,
Chandan Kumar and
Melodi Dorcas

Home is a safe space for conversations around childhood and memories of places, landscapes, people, objects, and stories that one deeply misses. Yasmin Jahan Nupur invites all KNMA visitors to pause, rest, and acknowledge those lost, disappeared feelings, connecting with other visitors and strangers, listening to their expressions and stories and while sharing their own.

As prompts to build these conversations, Nupur extends and choreographs certain gestures and intentions beyond her own body onto the overall collective body of KNMA visitors. Be the carrier and feel free to transfer them to other corners of the exhibition. Nupur hopes that this slowness and loose passage of ephemeral shared moments, instructions, and knowledge will add to our collective re-learning of how to relate to others, as we all slowly learn how to be in public spaces after the pandemic isolation.

You can also join the artist (and the actors) as she herself searches for the smells, trees, particular fruits and roads, people, and very small feelings that she associates with her childhood in her ancestral village home, sensations that she lost when she grew up and moved away. This re-constructed landscape swells with collective yearning for particular foods, games, playtime, and favorite objects from childhoods now disappeared, readings from Thakurmar Jhuli, and many other triggers, asking what we will make of it all.

Nupur works with sketches, installations, and performances. Her work explores human relationships from various perspectives, reflecting her belief in democratic rights regardless of social position. She explores social discrepancies such as those of women and migrants in South Asia, hoping to support increased understanding between peoples of different backgrounds.

THẢO NGUYỄN PHAN

b.1987 Ho Chi Minh City; lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City

Tropical Siesta, 2017

Two channel video
with sound; 13 minutes
41 seconds

Courtesy of the artist

Speedily painted images of students sleeping on their school benches quickly appear on two screens, emerging from a rural landscape in Vietnam. A text speaking of how the communist regime has placed agriculture at its economy's center accompanies the scene. The script tells of how children have access to only one book History of the Kingdom of Tonkin (1650) by Alexandre de Rhodes, a French Jesuit missionary, who converted not just the religion of the Vietnamese people's but also their relationship to their own language through his introduction of Romanized script. This work recalls a dark period during which many people were deported or executed—a history that was not written, the amnesia of a people to which the innocence of children responds.

Nguyễn is an artist who uses painting, installation, video, and performance to depict historical events, narrative traditions, and minor gestures that challenge received ideas and social conventions. Through literature, philosophy, and daily life, she observes ambiguous issues in social convention, history, and tradition. The artist is expanding her 'theatrical fields,' including what she calls performance gesture and moving images. Nguyễn is also a member of the collective Art Labor, which explores cross-disciplinary practices and develops art projects that benefit the Jrai indigenous community of the highlands of Vietnam.

MURARI JHA

b. 1988, Darbhanga; lives and works in New Delhi

Returning to Earth, A kinder search for home, 2022-2023

Bronze, M-seal, granite,
aluminum, wood, water, clay,
and mirror

Co-commissioned by Kiran
Nadar Museum of Art and
Samdani Art Foundation

Murari Jha stages a seen, felt, and absorbed landscape that we carry within us. Equally, it is an invitation to approach the space around us with an intuitive, symbolic, ecological, linguistic, and psychological understanding. For the artist, landscape and the idea of return become a performative and exploratory form. He developed this work while reflecting on the desperate return of the millions of migrant laborers who started their against-all-odds homeward journeys even at the cost of their lives during India's first Covid lockdown. Thus, a return to earth is a kinder search for and knowing of home.

Jha prompts us to insert our bodies into his scattered arrangement, replenishing the memory of the landscape of one's growing up, and

our relationships with the sun, moon, mountains, earth, trees, water, and animals. Jha's installation accumulates observations, stories, personal and social associations with each element, colloquial phraseology and idioms used for describing a landscape, such as *chanda mama* (moon as uncle), *billi massi* (cat as aunty), *samay ka pahad ban jana* (an insurmountable sense of time as a huge mountain to cross), *zameen ka jamm jaana* (sedimentation of soil).

Jha works in a range of mediums, including performance, sculpture, and painting. His work opens up aspects of the personal as political, the performativity of objects/body and the psychological processing of everyday occurrences and environments.

LEELA MUKHERJEE

b. 1916, Hyderabad, Sindh Province; d. 2002, New Delhi

'The Peacock Stage' mural at Welhams Boy's School, 1968

Photograph taken in 2023.

Courtesy Mrinalini Mukherjee Foundation

Archival material from the Mrinalini Mukherjee Foundation Archive

Set of four wood sculptures, 1950s - 1970s

Collection: Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Dance II, 1988

Etching

Collection: Kanchan Chander

Very Small Feelings creates a space to grasp, position and reflect on the life-long work of a pioneering sculptor and educator, Leela Mukherjee. Her art-making practice and contribution to arts pedagogy remains under-researched and overshadowed by the grand gestures of male-centric modernism. Her career marks a shifting register of practice that liaises between her domestic life, dedicated teaching practice, and an artistic journey as a life-long learner. This presentation of her works – mural, sculptures, etching and her teaching practice – along with photographs of her students' works is a proposition to think with the anecdotal, and piece together details of her influence as a teacher and person of immense resource from memories of Mukherjee's students, colleagues and friends.

With the mural of 'Peacock Stage', we dive into Mukherjee's idea of the Art Room that she instituted at the Welham Boy's School in Dehradun, at the Himalayan foothills, upon joining the institution as an arts teacher in 1953. She is credited to have modeled the art room similar to art studios of practicing artists, accessible to students at all times including late hours, and with access to a variety of mediums. Embedding such an open invitation into a school curriculum, she shifted arts from a hobby class to a life pursuit for many of her students, filled with discovery, experiences of looking and learning together, and of course the discipline for which she is well remembered. The simplicity and impact of such pedagogical effort and gesture places Art beyond the rigidity of class hours, percolating into life; and as a central motif of engagement with the world, especially for early learners.

While her classes in the Art Room often spilled outdoors, having her students repeatedly sketch the hills surrounding the school, her art practice which occupied the same spaces as her students came to find permanent residence on the walls of the school. The *Peacock Stage*, an onsite mural made by her in 1968 at the Welhams Boy's School at the behest of Ms. Oliphant, the founder of the institution, is one such example. The alumni, her students and the school remember it as an

iconic space of "memorable gatherings, assemblies and speeches," where "the peacock waits silently and patiently, in all its grandeur, with its wings spread wide to welcome all." This sets the stage, both literally and figuratively, for the presentation of her archive and her work for us to ponder. Dotting this *Peacock Stage* in the exhibition are photographs of her students holding their drawings, school notice-board exhibitions, and figurines made from soap and wood, and her own documentation of her works.

Four wood sculptures by Leela Mukherjee animate this backdrop, with animal figures complimenting the soap sculptures that one sees in the photographs. In these sculptures she draws references from the toy-making tradition and culture of rural artisans of South Asia, and her dedicated study of nature and bodies imbibed during her education at Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan. Mukherjee learned the skill of wood carving from the famous master artisan Sri Kulsunder during her stay in Kathmandu, Nepal from 1948 to 1950, and became one of the few female sculptors of her time to actively work with wood.

Together this assemblage of a presentation blurs the line between her practice as an artist and as an educator. She approached teaching art to children not as an isolated classroom exercise but as a laboratory for experimenting with learning methodologies and structures, from passing of skills and techniques to attitudes of engaging with the world through art. Leela Mukherjee started working at the Welham Preparatory School in Dehradun in 1953, and continued to create her own work in the same studio as her students until 1974. A graduate of Kala Bhavan, Santiniketan, she took in early on the Tagorean philosophy of the study of nature and life, and later extended this attitude into the development of her arts curriculum and classes. She was a student of Nandalal Bose and Ramkinkar Baij. She married artist Benode Behari Mukherjee in 1944 and assisted him to create the famous mural based on the life of medieval Indian saints at the Hindi Bhavan, Santiniketan in 1947.

RUPALI GUPTTE AND PRASAD SHETTY

Rupali Gupte b. 1974, Mumbai; lives and works in Mumbai
Prasad Shetty b. 1975, Mumbai; lives and works in Mumbai

Belly of the Strange III, 2023

Immersive wood structure

Commissioned by Kiran
Nadar Museum of Art and
Samdani Art Foundation

Capacity: 6-7 people at
a time

Please remove your shoes
before entering

The Belly of the Strange is a transactional object/space for children and the child in you. It holds within it strange books from different geographies, both real and fictional, inviting you to add to the stories in your imaginations. Belly's voluminous space with stage-like stepped access, is a poetic ascent to another register, to very small feelings. It becomes a place for daydreaming, a performative functional ground for multiple activities, exchanges and kinships with strangeness, strange forms, and ideas.

In its first iteration of the Belly of the Strange at MACBA, Barcelona in an exhibition curated by the Raqs Media Collective, the belly took the form of a strange bulbous fruit softening the high-modern masculine space of the European gallery. The second iteration at the Dhaka Art Summit 2023 in the exhibition 'Very Small Feelings' was made of a bamboo skeleton and fleshed with papier mache. It responded to the carnivalesque energies of the summit with feminine form and a womb-like space that invited everyone within. Now, in its third iteration at KNMA, the Belly assumes the form of a giant toy awkwardly fitting within a tight space, creating a confusing sense of scale. One doesn't know whether this is a large object or a diminutive space. Its whale-like interior invites you to sit in its warmth and glow, to tell and listen to stories and imagine worlds far and near. In doing so the work draws on the absurdities of transactional objects/spaces in cities that often bypass conventional narratives of capital to create logics of strange convivial encounters.

Visitors are invited to enter, read aloud and project their voices from the gaping orifices of the installation. Different projects and references within *Very Small Feelings* exhibition find home and resonances inside the Belly. Such as the books in reference to Afrah Shafiq's research and interactive game on Soviet Books translated in Indian languages, books in indigenous languages resulting from workshops led by Blaise Joseph and Atreyee Day, Amitav Ghosh's *Jungle Nama*, Anpu Varkey's *Summers' Children*, among others.

This large commissioned work draws on Rupali Gupte and Prasad Shetty's works on 'transactional objects' as the city settles, blurs and produces multiple trips and kicks through these transactional objects. Extension to shops, folding shops of street vendors, porting devices, resting apparatus, fixtures fixed on boundary walls that help occupy them, things used to claim space, orphaned furniture left for wanderers, etc. are all transactional objects. Gupte and Shetty trained as architects and urbanists. They jointly run Bard Studio, a multidisciplinary practice that traverses between architecture, art, and urban studies, and are founder members of the School of Environment and Architecture in Mumbai. Their research and practice sit at the intersection of experimental pedagogy, exploring different aspects of urban form and experience and building environments and objects inspired by functional everyday urban forms.

SUSANTA MANDAL

b. 1965, Kolkata; lives and works in New Delhi

Odds and Ends of a Place called 'Memari', 2022-2023

Performance installation with rotating stage, circuits, sensors, and motor.

Duration: 6 – 8 minutes

Commissioned by Samdani Art Foundation and Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Acknowledgement

Movement Programming:

Himanshu Bablani

Audio Editing:

Anupama Srinivasan

Voice Over:

Sarbani Mandal

Press the button to start the show. Settle into your seat and get ready to meet a string of imaginary characters from a place called 'Memari'. The repertoire of the show consists of a magician, a tailor, a shopkeeper, a girl, a teenager, a cat, and a few unknown characters. Sometimes their gender identities are blurred. Follow the clues and feel free to take imaginary leaps.

This theatrical experience unfolds on three distinct color-marked stages/scenes that are structured into two episodes. All invisible characters of the repertoire have their names marked with letters of the alphabet, and travel from one scene to another through spoken words. Sometimes the characters may not follow the described locations and, at times, appear to be glitches. These characters register themselves (or make their

presence) slowly on the stage, with specific descriptions and conversations. Playing with the idea of memory and staging, or rather how memory stages itself, Susanta Mandal creates an elaborate assortment of characters that allows viewers to develop their own associations and references for each one. He maps and controls these different characters, their appearances, absences, and traces through fade-in and fade-outs, kinetic mechanisms and automated circuit programming.

Inspired by the rawness of early technology of magic lantern and moving image making, Mandal constructs immersive interactive environments with spotlights and kinetic mechanisms. His works take on narrative and performative elements, echoing the tradition of vernacular storytelling in India.

SANJOY CHAKRABORTY

b. 1984, Chittagong; lives and works in Dhaka

Shades of Flowers, 2022-2023

Archival and participatory space based on 1950-70s children's culture in Bangladesh/ East Pakistan's three prominent newspapers.

Digital prints

Commissioned by Samdani Art Foundation and Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

Sanjoy Chakraborty sets up a participatory space that straddles history and memory, based on his research on the historical formation of children's pages in prominent newspapers in pre-liberation Bangladesh (East Pakistan), revealing their connections to the social and political situation of their time. Initiated by artists, writers and intellectuals, these children's pages—*Mukul Mahfil (Daily Azad)*, *Khelaghor (Daily Sangbad)* and *Kochi Kachar Mela (Daily Ittefaq)*—transformed into forms of organizations with their own focus on different activities for children over the course of several decades.

'Azad' was the first daily to debut in East Bengal after Partition, and published a weekly for children which came to be known as 'Mukuler Mahafil'. During the Pakistan period, two more weekly newspapers were published for children in the fifties and sixties - 'Kachi Kachar Mela' (Dainik Ittefaq) and 'Khelaghar' (Dainik Sangbad) – both are still running but their weekly pages for children no more exist. Each of these newspapers operated with a different ideology - on Pakistani nationalism, Bengali nationalism and leftist ideology which directly or indirectly reflected in those children's publications as well. Cuttings from those Bangladeshi children's newspaper are presented here in the work 'Shades of Flowers'. These newspapers are closely related to the childhood memories of the elderly people who grew

up in the fifties, sixties, and seventies Bangladesh.

The lower red portion of the artwork is left blank for children to draw, sketch and paint. While the older generation comes and discovers memories, children come and create memories. And with this memory, union will be created across generations. And the red here becomes the color of memory. Because memories like red color can be seen from a distance.

This slow and everyday embedding of powerful cultural practices related to children brings to light the under-researched relationship between modernism, the new nation state, and young children as cultural citizens, and how artists and creative practitioners addressed this relationship. Drawing from his fieldwork, research, and interviews of practitioners who continue to lead these organizations, Chakraborty's work gives a glimpse of the historical development of the cultural movement for children, and the regular contributions of many iconic modernist painters, writers, and cultural figures who illustrated and conceptualized content for them.

As an art historian, Chakraborty has a keen interest in finding new narratives of the history of Bangladesh in relation to art and its deeply rooted culture. He is also an artist who explores drawing, installation and performances derived from his research practice.

SIMON FUJIWARA

b. 1982, London; lives and works in Berlin

Once Upon a Who?, 2021

Installation with stop-animation

Duration: 5 minutes

Who is la Femme Cubiste? (Female Panic!), 2022

Who's a Blooming Fool? (Icon Appropriation Anxiety), 2022

Pastel and charcoal on canvas

Who is She? (Biological sex procreation), 2022

Who's Who? (Gender Questions), 2022

Who's Patriarchy? (Distressed Diagram), 2022

Gesso, acrylic, pencil, charcoal, pastel and acetate on wood panel

Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper

Who the Bær is a cartoon character created by the artist Simon Fujiwara taking inspiration from fairytales, fantasy literature, animation and theme park worlds. "Who", as they are known, seems to have not yet developed a strong personality or instincts. They have no fixed identity, no gender, and no sexuality. Who does not even seem to have a clear design but is a being in the making, a self-creation. Who only knows that they are an image, and they seek to define themselves traversing a "Whoniverse" of images. Who the Bær's world is a flat, online domain of pictures, yet one full of endless possibilities. Fujiwara created Who the Bær during the first Covid-19 lockdown in 2020 as a "childlike, dada-esque response to the increasingly nonsense world of hyper-capitalist entertainment culture." The artist elaborates that "Who is really a fairytale, in the end, one that asks 'What if...?' and allows us to imagine things we are not really allowed to imagine or question at the moment."

Who is la Femme Cubiste? (Female Panic!) and Who's Screaming at Who? (Eternal Influencer) are from Fujiwara's series of works recreating iconic artworks by famous, historically significant artists through the perspective of his cartoon figure Who the Bær. The former is painted in a style recalling the oeuvre of Spanish modernist painter Pablo Picasso, specifically his portraits of female models painted in a distinctly late cubist style. The depiction of Who the Bær draws on images of Picasso's portraits of women, especially long-time companion Dora Maar. Despite the work being heavily stylized, Who's characteristic features are clearly visible, namely their prominent pink tongue from which yellow liquid emanates in one form or another in almost all of Simon Fujiwara's depictions of the cartoon character. Who's a Blooming Fool? (Icon Appropriation Anxiety) is based on Vincent van Gogh's series of sunflower still life paintings, an iconic recurring motif in the post-impressionist artist's body of work. Closest to an iteration of the motif painted in 1888, Fujiwara's

work depicts a vase with a bouquet of sunflowers against a blue background. Who the Bær's shape can be recognized in the depicted bouquet of flowers, with the cartoon figure's characteristic enormously long pink tongue that circles the composition and seems to wrap around their own head.

Van Gogh's paintings of sunflowers have become one of the most popular images in the canon of Western art history. The paintings have been reproduced countless times in a large variety of media, ranging from books to consumer goods and merchandise. Who the Bær has been described by Fujiwara as lacking any form of concrete identity. Therefore, Who being integrated into images of existing works of art can be seen as part of the character's ongoing search for identity.

Who's Patriarchy? (Distressed Diagram) depicts Who in an abstract style. The geometric lines may recall styles of expressionism or cubism, but also are reminiscent of statistical graphics and charts. The drawing is paired with a print on acetate, a diagram explaining the patriarchy's reproduction cycle within society. Who is She? (Biological sex procreation), shows Who as a pregnant woman, rendered in a few expressive pencil strokes. The drawing is paired with an anatomical diagram printed on acetate, showing the development of a fetus. Who's Who? (Gender Questions) presents Who in a few abstract broad strokes. Their facial expression seems to be perplexed or questioning and it is paired with a printed chart mapping the overlapping of various gender identities.

Working across video, sculpture, painting, installation, and performance, Fujiwara's practice is a personal exploration of human desire that underpins tourist attractions, historical icons, celebrities, 'edutainment,' and neo-capitalism. In this seductive yet fraught arena, his work reveals the paradox of our simultaneous quest for fantasy and authenticity in the culture we consume.

MARZIA FARHANA WITH 270 YOUNG BANGLADESHI STUDENTS

b. 1985, Dhaka; lives and works in Dhaka and Richmond

The Equilibrium Project, 2022-2023

Video documentation of a multipart project and installation made in collaboration with 270 young students (classes 6 and 9) from Jaago Foundation, Bangladesh

Presentation realized with additional support from Unilever, and was commissioned by Samdani Art Foundation and Kiran Nadar Museum of Art

The Equilibrium Project began with Marzia Farhana conducting several online workshops with children engaged in Jaago Foundation learning programs living different parts of Bangladesh, including Dhaka, Habiganj, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Teknaf, Bandarban, and Gaibandha. The installation in the Dhaka iteration of 'Very Small Feelings' exhibition was a result of a collaborative process developed over several months, and it drew upon historical examples of artist-run pedagogical initiatives in Bangladesh and elsewhere. Reflecting on the figure of artist-educator, and interpreting the relationship between society, art-making and young children, she explored what engaged pedagogy may mean in resource-deprived contexts. Working with underprivileged and hard-to-reach children associated with Jaago,

Farhana's work questions as well as brings into focus aspects of innovative art practice to create a platform of emancipation and resistance for those who are outliers in society. This video documentation captures some aspects of the project as it was showcased in Dhaka Art Summit 2023.

Farhana works with several media including painting, installation, and video. Her practice is time-and-space based, facilitating collaborations, participation and reinforcing the possibility of co-authorship on works of art that reinvent empathy and emancipation. The pedagogical turn of her artistic practice emphasizes fostering social and environmental justice and empowering marginalized vulnerable communities.

LOKESH KHODKE

b. 1979, Bhopal; lives and works in New Delhi

Selected pages from
Comic Series:

The Speaking Mountain, 2022-2023

With research inputs and
materials from Asia Art
Archive (AAA)

Co-commissioned by
Kiran Nadar Museum of Art,
Samdani Art Foundation
and AAA

Khodke's imaginative leaps into the archive and interest in storytelling is part of a cluster of works that explores different children's art practices, highlighting local art teachers' life-long work and institutional histories focused on children's arts and education.

Khodke shares selected pages from his ongoing fictional comic series conjuring, through the artist's use of humor, a rich ground for exploring different artistic practices and dialogues across geographies. He entangles Hong Kong, Bhopal, and the landscape of the children's literary world of comics from India in the 1990s with personal insights and episodes that pull in his own earliest memories of the art scene in his native city of Bhopal. The protagonist of the comic, a young boy from Bhopal, travels through time and space, meeting real and imagined characters. He meets artist Ha Bik Chuen in Hong Kong in the early 1990s, and also Nagraj and other popular characters from the comic worlds of India, Hong Kong, and America, traveling onward into the current moment. These encounters spark many ideas and questions in the young boy's imagination.

This comic series was developed from Khodke's online artist-educator research residency at Asia Art Archive in 2021, where he was inspired by the photo contact sheets of children's artworks and exhibitions rigorously documented

by the artist Ha Bik Chuen in Hong Kong in the 1990s. This visual research material led him to initiate conversations on comics, children, and art with artists Ronnie Wong Lai Keung and Professor Oscar Ho. He also met artist Vinay Sapre who taught and worked at Jawahar Bal Bhavan from the 1980s, teaching aeromodelling and art to children and young adults throughout his life. Engaging with the archival material and stitching his research with popular visual material like children's illustrated magazines, comics, films, news articles, Khodke connects many divergent threads, and plans to further develop the comic and continue his research on Bal Bhavans in India.

Khodke has been making illustrations for children's books and comics for almost two decades. As a practicing comic-book artist and educator in the visual arts, he co-founded Blue Jackal, a platform for creating and publishing visual narratives, comics, picture books and interactive tools and programs for learners of different ages. He is also co-founder and co-editor of Drawing Resistance, a Hindi/English zine reflecting on the current socio-political climate. Khodke is currently working as Director Education at Art1st, an organization working towards art education for young ones and equally engaging with (art) teachers in schools across India.

ASHFIKA RAHMAN

b 1988, Dhaka; lives and works in Bangladesh

Rebirth of Waters, 2023

Recycled handmade paper and kinetic installation with paper puppets

Collective effort by children from Chalan Beel, Studio Bhaskarmee and Jol Putul Puppets

Commissioned by Kiran Nadar Museum of Art and Samdani Art Foundation

"Rebirth of Waters" is a process-oriented, innovative and transformative project that tackles two pressing environmental issues in the expansive water land of Bangladesh, specifically the Chalan Beel area: underwater garbage pollution and the lack of educational opportunities for village children. The project's primary objective is to empower village kids by actively involving them in the cleaning of polluted water bodies and the creation of recycled handmade paper using the collected garbage. Through this initiative, our aim is to foster a sense of environmental stewardship while providing valuable educational and skill-building opportunities for the children.

Moreover, this project embraces the use of the recycled handmade paper as a medium to explore the captivating realm of Bangladesh's local oral ghost stories, aptly titled "Paper Bhooter Golpo. Rooted in folklore and passed down through generations, these enchanting tales hold a significant place. By employing the powerful combination of visual art and storytelling, the paper puppets shed light on the mysterious, eerie, and enthralling nature of Bangladeshi ghost stories.

"Rebirth of Waters" intertwines several threads: the hauntingly beautiful folktales on ghosts, a holistic and pioneering approach to address the pressing issue of underwater garbage pollution and educational opportunities to village children of Chalan Beel when they are cut-off from the world for four months because of flooding.

The three puppet ghosts here are – Shakchunni, Mechho Bhoot and Mamdo Bhoot. The word Shakchunni comes from the Sanskrit word "Shankhachurni." It is usually a ghost of a married woman who

wears a special kind of traditional bangles made of shell, Sankha. These bangles are a sign of a married Hindu women in Bengal. In Bangladesh as well as in India, Shakchunnis are different from Petnis and are believed to live in trees and attack people who disturb them. They are considered unbeatable, and the only way to get rid of them is by calling an Imam or Pandit, who perform a variety of shamnistic rituals to remove them.

Mechho Bhoot is a kind of ghost who likes to eat fish. The word Mechho comes from Machh that means 'fish' in Bengali. Mechho Bhoot usually lives near to the village ponds or lakes full of fish. These kinds of ghosts urge the late night fishermen or a lone person who carries fish with him to give them their fish by saying in a nasal tone – "Machh Diye Ja" (meaning to give me the fish). If the person refuses to leave the fish for the Mechho Bhoot, it threatens to harm them. Sometimes they steal fish from kitchens in village household or from the boats of fishermen. Mamdo Bhoot are believed to be the ghosts of Muslims. They normally stay in bushy trees and try to disturb passer-bys in different ways. Ghosts of such kind are believed to scare people by twisting their necks or possess them. In Bangladesh they belonged to the highest ranks of ghosts.

Ashfika Rahman is a Bangladeshi visual artist, teacher, and art initiator, who explores systemic social issues in her home country through her work. Her practice straddles art and documentary. In each of her works, she tries to challenge mainstream perspectives on complex systemic social issues, especially the unequal treatment of minority communities in the periphery of Bangladesh, raising awareness globally about these alarming threats to humanity.

NEHA CHOKSI

b. 1973, Belleville; lives and works in Los Angeles and Mumbai

Leaf Fall, 2007-08

HDV, Colour, Sound, Subtitles

Duration: 14 minutes
15 seconds

Collection: Kiran Nadar
Museum of Art

A film by Neha Choksi

Performers:

Samar Katyaan
Ashish Pandey
Vinay Chauhan
Madhu Yadav
Suresh Yadav
The children of Nanoli village

Camera:

Neha Choksi & Prasann Jain

Editing & Sound Design:

Arindam Ghatak

Thanks to the Nanoli
Stud Farm

At first, the scaffolding around the enormous tree feels like a measuring scale or a protective layer. But gradually, from morning to dusk, the tree is stripped, tortured, almost left for dead, becomes visible with only a branch left intact. In this elaborate performative staging, the viewer is part of the tussle of finding a language of absence, as Choksi utilises the “emotive force” emerging in the process as her material for art.

Leaf Fall shows a troupe’s denuding of a rural peepul tree over the course of a single day, leaving behind an autumnal sprig. The surviving leaf is made special through the day’s relentless process of subtraction, and it is this process of absencing and elimination that propel the emotive force of *Leaf Fall*. In *Leaf Fall*, Neha Choksi was interested in gaining access to that single last remaining leaf, in perceiving it in its singularity, and

the only way to do that, was to remove the presence of the other leaves. The text spoken in the film was generated through a poetic distillation of over 40 pages of transcribed interviews with crews, actors and friends. *Leaf Fall* is part of the trilogy of films she made in the course of seven years; other two performance-based films are *Petting Zoo/Minds to Lose*, and *Iceboat*, both works are also about evacuating presence.

Working across performance, video, installation, sculpture, and other formats, Neha Choksi disrupts logic by setting up poetic and absurd interventions in the lives of all things— from stone to plant, animal to self, friends to institutions. Embracing a confluence of disciplines, she allows in strands of her intellectual, cultural, and social contexts to revisit entanglements of time, consciousness, and socialization.

ARTREACH INDIA

est. 2015, New Delhi

Humaari Duniya, 2020-2023

Interactive installation with photo booth, drawings, books, handmade papers, sculptures and animations.

Artworks from Artreach-KNMA Teaching Fellowships by children from Karm Marg, Udayan Care, Salaam Baalak Trust, Rainbow Homes and Tara Homes.

'Humaari Duniya' presents artworks by children from New Delhi NCR based care homes who have been part of the Teaching Fellowship programmes between 2020-23. These are Rainbow Homes, Udayan Care, Salaam Baalak Trust, Tara Homes and Karm Marg.

Through the Teaching Fellowships instituted by Artreach India and KNMA, artist educators lead intensive workshop series for children in care. Together with the students, they create spaces of trust and joy, often using icebreaker games that break inhibitions and relieve tension. Within that space of 'shared learning', children experiment with materials easily accessible to them - newspapers,

cardboard, painting with mud, paper mache - taking their first leaps into the wider universe of art making, while constantly asking questions about it, and making it their own.

Over the workshops in their care homes, many little worlds emerge, with their magical characters, multiple dimensions and playful narratives. With this section of Very Small Feelings we step into those processes of making, and the imaginative effervescence of art mediation. The works presented here are from Fellowships led by artist-educators Aditi Aggarwal, Akshay Sethi, Gopa Roy, Goutam Pal, Jyothidas KV, Tahsin Akhtar, Shoili Kanungo and Tilottama B.

Young artists: Motibur, Chanchal, Shiva, Shivam, Kundan, Suraj, Ram, Sumit, Ashu, Rakesh, Irshad, Ershad, Lalita, Aarti 1, Reena, Meena, Asma, Priyanka, Jimadi, Kulsum, Heena, Shabina, Shahin, Aarti 2, Ankita, Shivam, Alka, Lali, Shama, Ashif, Subhash, Komal, Rahul, Kajal, Simran, Noorjahan, Kamaljeet, Sharwan, Manoj, Raj, Vishal, Vanshika, Noorie, Sikander, Shyamu, Rashid, Lokesh, Nandini, Sachin, Sameer, Piyush, Roshni, Jyoti, Nirmala, Shivani, Lakhi, Khushi, Krishna, Deep, Nihal, Harshit, Raj, Kishan, Shivam, Shadma, Chanda, Simran, Nisha 1, Raveena, Pihu, Nisha 2, Sanjana, Chandini, Priyanka, Samiksha, Laxmi, Nancy, Ekta, Tanya, Deepak, Ansh, Raja, Rajat, Bhola, Rajesh, Gagan, Angad, Sahil, Mehruddin, Sameer, Ajay, Vishal and Pankaj

Photo Booth painted by: Rajesh, Bhola, Ajay, Rajat, Priyanka, Nisha, Tanya 1, Tanya 2, Pihu

ANGA ART COLLECTIVE

b 1988, Dhaka; lives and works in Bangladesh

Khaal Gaon, 2022-2023

Audio visual installation with bamboo, clay, earth, and jute elements

Commissioned by Samdani Art Foundation and Kiran Nadar Museum of Art with additional support from the Inlaks Shivdasani Foundation

Contributors:

Jugal Kumar, Anup Let, Devadeep Gupta, Gyanwant Yadav and Umesh Singh

Cluster of different materials, interactive vehicles, seeds, books and intimate play spaces welcome you to Anga Art Collective's new iteration of their installation Khaal Gaon, further evolved from its first occurrence in the Dhaka edition of the exhibition. They are inspired by *sutal* which in Assamese means a play-area that has multiple entry points. Creating a dense interlinkage of visual and sensory stories, they have conceptually developed *Khaal Gaon* as a laboratory space where individual practices, observations and thoughts of members of the collective are in conversation with each other. With this evolving vocabulary of their collective *kNOw* school, they invite visitors to engage in the indigenous ways of knowing and further stretching the contours of *Khaal Gaon*.

This project is derived from two Assamese words: Khaal, meaning low land or a small water body in and around a village settlement, and Gaon, meaning village. Since the 1970s, regular floods and river erosion in the Rahmariya region of upper Assam (located in what is now India) have gradually erased water bodies, fertile fields, wetlands, vegetation, and a cluster of 35 villages, leading to villagers' displacement and resettlement in distant villages. Submerged under the endless flow of the river Brahmaputra, *Khaal Gaon* disappeared from the physical geography and settled into the oral history of its people and their descendants. Remembered as an arena of community feasts, fishing festivals full of life and rural energies, as well as a music and performative space, the *Khaal Gaon* is now only present in stories of the elderly generation who once inhabited the land as young adults.

It emerges in the exhibition as a place conjured from the collective memories of its displaced inhabitants.

Members of Anga Art Collective take this invisible village and the childhood memories of its inhabitants as a lens to rethink the figure of the child as part of a depleting landscape in an ecologically and politically turbulent context. From their field trips near the site of this invisible village and conversations with the elderly generation, they invoke an immersive place loaded with the barter system practice, the playfulness associated with materials, architectures, and performances. Climate migration and seasonal displacements are common in this flood-prone region, and have altered the occupations, site, stories, and memories of the community. This installation navigates the collective psyche of a displaced community, and explores relationships connecting age and ecology, artistic language and memory, playfulness, and elderliness.

Initiated in 2010 by a group of friends, Anga Art Collective came together with the vision to engage with the contemporary and the layered history of Assam in Northeast India through art. With 13 current members, Anga fosters a creative and collaborative space for practice, which is developed by sharing knowledge with other artists, village communities, ecologists, academics, and activists. *Know School* and *The Granary* are two such initiatives that are site-specific as well as pedagogical exercises in community-based learning and re-learning. For Anga, a collective is a growing process rather than a closed ensemble.

NIDHI KHURANA

b.1980, Allahabad, Lives and works in Delhi

Playroom, 2023

Book-making and other experiments with students of Udavi School in Edyanchavadi, a rural village in Auroville, Tamil Nadu, India

Artist present in an open cubicle with her desk inside the exhibition space of *Very Small Feelings* from 2 July to 31 August, and responding to Devi Prasad's books and art education program of Nai Talim at Sevagram

Playroom for Nidhi Khurana emerges from a thick pile of memories from school. An alumni of Welham Girls School, Dehradun, which had an Art Room as an odd building – an L-Shaped structure with three doors, and a stage in the corner where the two lines of the L met and lots of windows to let the air in – a unique space, adaptable to almost any situation, a 'room of requirement' that transformed itself into an assembly hall on rainy days or dance classes after lunch, a rehearsal room, debate venue and many others things. It was a room devoted to 'play'.

This Playroom inside the museum is a means to map her journey as an artist educator as she commits to spend almost two months at her desk inside the museum. She plans to make books, reflect on her own education, as a student, a teacher in the same school, an educator and an artist in the world today, keeping the book by Devi Prasad at the core of this investigation. Devi Prasad's approach in the book, *Art: The Basis of Education* is based on years of research around art, children, child art, human behavior, psychology and the role of art in the life of an individual, combined with his genuine interest in studying and interpreting the drawings and

scribblings of children, and giving them agency to make their own books and answer their inquiry with a hands-on approach. This we understand from Devi Prasad's own writings and books, which are also available to browse in Khurana's *Playroom*, along with the artworks made by the children of Nai talim at Sevagram (1944-58) that *Very Small Feelings* exhibition has loaned from the family of Devi Prasad.

Another work, a site-specific installation forms one wall of the Playroom. It consists of multiple frames inspired by the idea of a Book, and invites participation and interaction in the viewing process. It is a book, and for Khurana each book is a portal, a carrier of an idea or a host of ideas, from the author to the reader that is open to individual interpretation. The images used in the installation are with the children of Udavi School in Edyanchavadi, a rural village in Auroville, Tamilnadu, India. For three months in 2013 between June and August Ruchin Soni and Nidhi Khurana were invited to create a curriculum for Art for the Primary section. The collaged images here create a play around the idea of the lily pond which was an important architectural element of the Udavi school building.

DEVI PRASAD AND NAI TALIM AT SEVAGRAM

(b. 1921, Uttar Pradesh; d. 2011, Delhi)

52 drawings made by children who were part of the art education program of Nai Talim at Sevagram 1944 – 1958 with Devi Prasad as their art teacher

Hand-made books by students of Devi Prasad, Nai Talim at Sevagram, 1945

Books written by Devi Prasad

Collection: Bindu Prasad and family

Devi Prasad published his seminal book 'Art: The Basis of Education' in 1958 based on his fifteen years of practical experience of teaching, and writing on Child Art at Nai Talim, the educational institute of Gandhi's scheme for educational reconstruction of India at Sevagram, Wardha. At Sevagram he conducted several experiments with designing the arts curriculum that aimed at the emotional and intellectual development of children. In one such experiment prompted by a question from one of his students who was curious about 'How do people write books?', led to a fifteen-day intense duration of book writing, drawing, detailing each page and binding. These six books by children from Nai Talim and from Prasad's workshop are on display here; each book carries at least ten illustrations made by the author, and a devoted author's page.

About this experiment Prasad writes in his book, "It was now my task to convince the staff council to allow the experiment to be conducted by giving full freedom from other activities and responsibilities to

these six children. The would-be authors would have freedom to go and meet anyone at any sensible time, including people in the nearby village, to do research and compile the material for their books. They were exempted from attending classes on other subjects and also from the three-hour morning sessions of basic craft or agriculture... For fifteen days continuously these children came to the class, which was next to my residence, started their work at an early hour of the day and continued until sunset."

The exhibition is speckled with 52 drawings of his students aged between 2 to 14, on loan from his collection. Most of these works are published in his seminal book with detailed annotations, anecdotes and observations from his experiments at Nai Talim, Sevagram. Himself as a student of Rabindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose, Prasad combined two schools of thoughts on education for a new India – Tagorean and the Gandhian – in his approach to arts and an advocate of child-art.

AFRA EISMA

b.1993 the Hague; lives and works in the Hague

Poke Press Squeeze Clasp, 2021-23

Yarn, ceramics and textiles

Organized with the support of Mondriaan Funds and Kunstinstituut Melly with curatorial contributions of Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy and Rosa de Graaf

Courtesy of the artist and No Man's Art Gallery

Drawing on literature by influential female authors from across cultures such as Begum Rokeya, Audre Lorde and Ursula K. Le Guin, Eisma interweaves characters from her imagination with ideas provoked by the work of the writers that she reads. Eisma creates a welcoming and lively gathering space where we can intertwine our limbs with those of the otherworldly and alien beings, taking delight in physical proximity, assembly, and embrace, core elements to our human experience. Gathered around a floor tapestry, these figures invite us to become entangled in their embrace and engage in conversation with their worlds and the worlds of other

visitors, and to imagine new worlds altogether.

Responding to an increasing experience of uneasiness, isolation, and uncertainty towards anything deemed extraneous to our familial environment, Eisma seeks to appease these maladies by fostering mutual understanding and shared experience through art. Using craft techniques in novel ways, Eisma explores and manifests personal stories through immersive and intimate installations of textiles, sculptures, and ceramics. Inspiring her works are characters or imaginary friends that interweave sensuality with lightheartedness.

DEVI PRASAD AND NAI TALIM AT SEVAGRAM

(b. 1921, Uttar Pradesh; d. 2011, Delhi)

52 drawings made by children who were part of the art education program of Nai Talim at Sevagram 1944 – 1958 with Devi Prasad as their art teacher

Hand-made books by students of Devi Prasad, Nai Talim at Sevagram, 1945

Books written by Devi Prasad

Collection: Bindu Prasad and family

Devi Prasad published his seminal book 'Art: The Basis of Education' in 1958 based on his fifteen years of practical experience of teaching, and writing on Child Art at Nai Talim, the educational institute of Gandhi's scheme for educational reconstruction of India at Sevagram, Wardha. At Sevagram he conducted several experiments with designing the arts curriculum that aimed at the emotional and intellectual development of children. In one such experiment prompted by a question from one of his students who was curious about 'How do people write books?', led to a fifteen-day intense duration of book writing, drawing, detailing each page and binding. These six books by children from Nai Talim and from Prasad's workshop are on display here; each book carries at least ten illustrations made by the author, and a devoted author's page.

About this experiment Prasad writes in his book, "It was now my task to convince the staff council to allow the experiment to be conducted by giving full freedom from other activities and responsibilities to

these six children. The would-be authors would have freedom to go and meet anyone at any sensible time, including people in the nearby village, to do research and compile the material for their books. They were exempted from attending classes on other subjects and also from the three-hour morning sessions of basic craft or agriculture... For fifteen days continuously these children came to the class, which was next to my residence, started their work at an early hour of the day and continued until sunset."

The exhibition is speckled with 52 drawings of his students aged between 2 to 14, on loan from his collection. Most of these works are published in his seminal book with detailed annotations, anecdotes and observations from his experiments at Nai Talim, Sevagram. Himself as a student of Rabindranath Tagore and Nandalal Bose, Prasad combined two schools of thoughts on education for a new India – Tagorean and the Gandhian – in his approach to arts and an advocate of child-art.

ANPU VARKEY

b. 1980, Bangalore; lives and works in Bangalore

Summer's Children, 2017-19

Selected drawings from the set
of 92 works made for the
graphic novel

Felt tip pen and brush pen
on paper

Collection: Kiran Nadar
Museum of Art

Set inside a rubber plantation in Kerala, *Summer's Children* resides in the memory of a lost place and childhood seen through the eyes of two siblings as they traverse the day. Both run across the field, through ant trails, and rubber trees. They run to the river and to the rain, curious and observant, and looking alike. They pick leaves, wander into thickets, chase animals, swim and catch fish in the village pond, crane their necks to look up to the sky, trees, and adults. Dot by dot, episodic memory, plays, sounds and landscape of childhood come to touch and visit us. Childhood here is a new place of observation and inquiry, of nostalgia, smells, and stories. Made for a self-published artist book, reading these monochromatic drawings is to attune yourself to a slow, joyful, sensorial looking and passing of a day where many delicate, minor

events happen around us.

Up on the tree, a nutmeg pod pops. A jackfruit falls on the ground. Fire ants make a leaf-house on guava trees. Varkey took two years to complete this silent graphic novel, which is partly autobiographical and based on time spent in her grandmother's ancestral village in rural Kerala. With each drawing, she creates a space she didn't know she inhabited or still carries within her.

Known for distinct graffiti and public murals in different cities of India, Anpu Varkey's practice pulses with attitude: unapologetic, experimental, and not afraid to share her vulnerabilities. Over the years, she has contributed immensely to the vibrant growing street art scene in India. Graphic novels and bookmaking are another aspect of her practice.

DAVID HORVITZ

b. 1982, Los Angeles; lives and works in Los Angeles

Change the Name of Days, 2021/2023

Poster Edition of Artist Book

Published by Jean Boîte
Éditions & Yvon Lambert

Seventeen prompts to imagine the world differently pop up across the museum – on the glass facades, windows, restrooms, near the escalator and many unexpected places in the mall. These prompts are a selection from thirty-two lessons and short teaching units developed by David Horvitz, an artist and a father, with the help of his then 5-year-old daughter, originally published in an artist book entitled *Change the Name of the Days*. Each prompt provides visitors with an opportunity to develop performative actions, and to build new personal collections of poetic instruments and thoughts. From instructions such as "welcome the night into your house" to "exchange breaths with a plant,"

this artistic intervention invites reflection on the immateriality of the world surrounding us, unlearning what we know and have been taught and, instead, learning something else, something new. We invite all museum visitors to choose any prompt and perform.

Performance, the idea of the game, and exchange with the public are central to Horvitz's practice. The concept of time in relation to the body and to paired relationships, is found in most of his work, spanning art books, photography, performance art, and mail art as well as new media, often exploring the relationship between man-made systems and natural phenomena.

MEENA

Meena is a spirited nine-year-old girl who wishes to go to school, but her parents see no purpose to this, because she is a girl. To overcome this problem, Meena enlists the help of her parrot, Mithu, who memorizes the school lesson and relays it to her after class. As a result, Meena learns how to count in twos. She counts her family's chickens and realizes that one is missing. It turns out that a thief has stolen the chicken. The villagers chase the thief and are able to recover the chicken. As a result of this incident, Meena's parents realize the value of education and allow her to attend school along with her brother, Raju.

Meena is a South Asian children's television series created by UNICEF. It has been broadcast in English, Bengali, Hindi, Nepali, and Urdu languages and first aired in 1993 on Bangladeshi national television. It has since been broadcast

on state television in seven SAARC countries, including DD National in India. Ram Mohan, a famous Indian cartoonist, is the creator of the titular character Meena while UNICEF's Neill McKee was the series creator.

The cartoon series is produced with the support of UNICEF as part of a program to raise awareness against various social inequalities in South Asian countries and to educate children. Awareness created through Meena cartoons includes stopping child marriages, encouraging the construction and use of hygienic toilets, sending girls to school, giving more importance to education than marriage of young girls, stopping dowry, equal nutrition and opportunities for boys and girls. Meena Day is celebrated on 24 September every year in South Asia, Africa and East Asia.

MARIE WABBES AND EDITIONS AKOMA MBA

The Belgian illustrator and author Marie Wabbes began creating children's books in 1965 after ten years of working at Le Soir, a newspaper, where she created ink drawings to accompany articles when they did not have photographs on hand. Her early books sought to tell a story that made buildings and monuments come alive for children, so that when they encountered them, they would recognize them and feel connected. Teddy Bears, food, animals, and other elements of the everyday come alive in new ways through her stories and illustrations which have been translated into many languages - from Swahili, to English, to Korean, and more. The copyright income from her practice making children's books enabled her to buy back the copyrights to the furniture designs of her late-husband, the acclaimed Belgian designer Jules Wabbes.

In the 1980s, Marie Wabbes was living in Cameroon with her second husband who was a diplomat. By then a successful illustrator of children's books in Belgium, she was concerned that the children's books she was encountering on the African Continent had mostly European protagonists and scenarios. Inspired to do something about this, she started to run workshops around 1987 in Mali, Benin, and Cameroon that encouraged young adults to become authors and illustrators of their own story books for children. Many of these stories were so wonderful that they needed to be published and distributed, and with little to no money, Marie helped them start a publishing house with the help of the Dutch corporation Akomam'ba.