

# Developing Contacts and Networks in India



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## Who am I?

- I'm an independent freelance researcher, writer and curator.
- After having worked in numerous institutions for over five years, I understood the importance of representing the work of artists from different regions of the world in our museums, but wondered, given the time constraints of many museum/gallery curators research trips, what was still left undiscovered.
- During 2014 I undertook an extensive research trip through India to uncover the country's emerging contemporary artistic talent and leading independent arts organisations.
- After a tiring a extremely rewarding trip, I was aware I had merely scratched the surface of the country's vibrant arts scene and will be returning for a further extensive research trip from January to April 2016.



## My Approach to Developing Networks and Contacts ...

- India is a complex country with many diverse layers to the country's systems and the way the art scene works is not hugely different.
- By heading straight to the main galleries, most of who represent a chosen group of artists who they represent, you're picking up on their network and not making your own.
- India's arts network works on face to face contact. Once you've connected with one person you will very likely find it easier to connect with others, but be warned, it takes time to build this deeper level of connection .
- I had many positive and encouraging comments from artists within the network I established, particularly about the written articles I produced to communicate my findings through UK publications:
  - "It is beautifully written and very concise and brings to light something more than the mainstream, really appreciate this."
  - "Thank you for your interest with my art and art activity. Really appreciate."
  - "This is amazing work. Thanks for portraying a beautiful picture of my country. This is indeed a very good research, very well thought."



Ravi Joshi, *Death of a Bee* 2009

## How did I achieve this?

- Staying with organisations such as 1ShanthiRoad in Bangalore and working with other independent organisations such as Cona in Mumbai's suburbs who helped me to make connections which I expanded further.
- Asking for recommendations from artists of other artists whose work the recommend I engage with, enabling me to build a strong network and uncover previously undiscovered emerging artistic talent.
- Spending long sustained periods of time in each city allowed me to take time to explore various artists work, visit their studios and develop a more intimate understanding of their work.
- By approaching the research with a fully open mind and allowing the artists work to speak for itself.
- By maintaining a respectful approach and allowing my research findings guide me rather than being directed by any constraints or need to find evidence which fitted a set criteria.



1 ShanthiRoad, Bangalore

## Next Steps ...

- After much research into what people wanted to see here in the UK and what others who are already researching this area wanted to access, it became apparent that there is a need for a central space to hold and share information around emerging contemporary South Asian artists and the latest happenings within the South Asian contemporary art scene.
- By considering different approaches to achieving this central space which would be easily accessible to all who wanted to find out more about the regions arts scene, the best possible solution was to form an interactive web platform which would host my own research and could eventually include that of others researching contemporary South Asian art.
- The site is currently in the planning stages and will undergo development during a further research trip from January 2016 to April 2016. An official UK launch will be held in May 2016, although the site will be live before then.



Cona Projects, Mumbai

## Moving Forward with the Network ...

- Central to the expansion of the network and its cross-cultural collaboration aims will be the development of the online web portal – *ArtHive South Asia* – an open archive of my research and a source of new writing about the work of emerging contemporary South Asian artists and arts organisations.
- The *ArtHive* will be a fully searchable resource featuring the work of contemporary artists living and working in South Asia.
- *ArtHive* will also contain cultural city guides, details of independent organisations and cultural festivals.
- After expanding, *ArtHive* will look to instigate collaborative projects between UK and South Asian artists and work with arts organisations to increase the visibility of the artists within its network.
- *ArtHive* will also have a strong social media presence to help engage new audiences and promote the work of the artists within its network.
- The network will be expanded to other South Asian countries including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Pakistan.



Autoraja, at 1ShanthiRoad

## What do I want my research to achieve?

- To bring the work of South Asian contemporary artists with whom UK audiences are not yet familiar to their attention and to new audiences within South Asia.
- To build a form of cross-cultural communication channel between artists in the UK and South Asia enabling them to communicate and collaborate.
- To get to the heart of communities across South Asia and the UK by connecting and working with artists whose work tackles the everyday issues faced by residents through their work.
- To creating effective and mutually beneficial channels for collaboration, exchange and international projects by acting locally but thinking internationally.
- To develop a deeper understanding of the art scene within South Asia by representing the artists work for its own merits and not exoticising them as 'South Asia artists'.
- To experiment with the idea of what a global art scene means to the artists working within it through a series of experimental exchanges, collaborations, projects and exhibitions.



Manmeet Devgun, *I have got the balls*, 2002

# Appendix

Previously published articles of interest ...

## For a-n, The Artists Network:

- International: Lessons from India's vibrant and experimental art scene - <https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/international-lessons-from-indias-vibrant-and-experimental-art-scene>

## For Tate's Blog:

- How the Islamic architecture of Fatehpur Sikri inspired Nasreen Mohamedi - [www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/Islamic-architecture-Fatehpur-Sikri-Nasreen-Mohamedi](http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/Islamic-architecture-Fatehpur-Sikri-Nasreen-Mohamedi)

## For The North West Federation of Museums:

- INTERNATIONAL: Nek Chand's Rock Garden, Chandigarh, India - <http://www.nwfed.org.uk/nek-chands-rock-garden-chandigarh-india-6949.html>
- INTERNATIONAL: The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art in India - <http://www.nwfed.org.uk/emma-sumner-reviews-the-the-kiran-nadar-museum-of-art-in-india-6813.html>
- INTERNATIONAL: The Anokhi Museum of Hand Printing, Jaipur, India - <http://www.nwfed.org.uk/the-anokhi-museum-of-hand-printing-jaipur-a-feature-written-by-emma-sumner-6728.html>

## For Aesthetica Magazine:

- Highlights from the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2014 - <http://www.aestheticamagazine.com/highlights-kochi-muziris-biennale-2014/>

## For The Double Negative:

- Field Trip: 'The Silicon Valley of India', Bangalore (Bengaluru) - <http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2015/05/field-trip-bangalore-art-scene-bengaluru/>
- Field Trip: Gujarat, 'The Jewel Of The West' - <http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2015/03/field-trip-the-jewel-of-the-west-gujarat/>
- Field Trip: Discovering Delhi's Art Scene - <http://www.thedoublenegative.co.uk/2014/12/field-trip-discovering-delhis-art-scene/>

## For My Blog:

- STUDIO VISIT: Ravi Joshi - <http://www.emmasumner.com/studio-visit-ravi-joshi/>
- STUDIO VISIT: Manmeet Devgun - <http://www.emmasumner.com/studio-visit-manmeet-devgun/>