

**Government College of Fine Arts, Chennai**  
**and Government College of Fine Arts, Kumbakonam**

**Curator: C.P. Kriashnapriya**

**Project at the Schools: Brief Introduction**

*'Rest with your dream inside my dream'\*-  
Mapping labour*

The Industrial School of Arts, 1850 marked the beginning of the 'labour history' within the Government College of Fine Arts, Chennai. The Government College of Kumbakonam, 1887, an extension of the Chennai College carries layers of shared histories. An artist collective from both Colleges together have explored the Institutional, local, personal histories and the social manifestation of different roles. They have gathered, interpreted and evolved an imagined archive/museum mapping labour. Documenting individual lives, documenting labour.

A locked up Colonial Museum within the Chennai College, an erasure of history.

What could have been inside these large empty glass vitrines?

An imagined archive/museum- What is an archive? What is a museum? Who and what can be archived?



The process of putting this exhibition together has taken the artists great distances internally and externally. Listening to the stories of a hundred year old farmer who works even now. To listen to an old woman singing a spontaneous 'opari', songs sung when someone in the community dies. A man who buries and burns dead bodies. A 'Thevar attam' dancer who has documented his own folk form as a performer and artist. Sanitary cleaners who clean the drains in Kumbakonam and the Central Railway Station in Chennai. Recording the stories of domestic labour and 'labour pain' of

child birth. Collecting artist's sweat to in an attempt to visualize labour. Documenting the 'Pattarai', a traditional bronze casting workshop in and around Kumbakonam.

Most of the artists have documented their deep rooted labour histories. Some of them come from traditional craft based communities that have been associated with the Colleges. These links can be traced back and seen in relation with the Colleges and their location. The layered collection of stories are of the artists or people close to them. Their range of exploration is testimony to their engagement with the subject.



## **Workshop I**

### **Workshop with Kalieaswari Srinivasan**

Workshop held at: 'Sundravilas', No.15, Bishop Lane, Vepery, Chennai-600007

Dates: 27-9-2016 to 28-9-2016

Number of participating students: 24 students (Govt. College of Fine Arts, Chennai and Kumbakonam)

1.Kameshwaran	7.Priya	13.Ranjith	19.Divya
2.Prakash	8.Devaraj	14.Ranjitha	20.Megaladevei
3.Padmapriya	9.Ayyappan	15.Sri Hari	21.Oviya
4.Deepika	10.Oviya D.A	16.Vishnu	22.Yogapritha
5.Sinduja	11.Parthik	17.Karthik.S	23. Sentamil Selvan

6.Sandhya	12.Agilan	18.Murgaswamy	24.Kamal
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### **Schedule of the workshop:**

- Collaborative Workshop between student of the Govt. College of Fine Arts, Chennai and the student of the Govt. College of Fine Arts, Kumbakonam.
- To exchange ideas and establish a connection between the projects that they are working on.
- To introduce performance as a medium.
- To develop the 'labour archive' together.

**Resource Person/s with brief bio:** **Kalieaswari Srinivasan** is a theatre actor, based in Chennai, India. She has worked with different theatre groups in southern India and with a couple of French groups, during their visit in India. She is an active performer, who has worked on plays based on various forms of theatre in her region- the traditional *therukoothu*; modern and contemporary; devised; physical; ritualistic, children's; street theatre. Theatre Y, Manalmagudi from Kovilpatti, Indianostrum in Pondichery are the three main groups with whom she has worked. She has performed in prestigious theatre spaces including Rangashankara, Prithvi theatre, as part of various theatre festivals. She considers performing in public spaces as crucial and meaningful.

Reality (the play was written soon after the Gujarat pogrom in 2002; it dealt with mob violence and communal and individualistic behaviour in the times of violence) with theatre Y, directed by Yog; Japee Tipu Sultan and Furies –A Diptych (a devised play that dealt with the mob mentality and capital punishment) with Indianostrum, directed by Koumarane Valavane; Land of Ashes and Diamonds (a devised play that deals with war-mainly Srilankan Civil War, victims, perpetrators and redemption) with Indianostrum, directed by Koumarane Valavane; Munderikotte ( a play written and performed as part of the Writer's Bloc Festival, that deals with the lives of Salt pan workers in a Village named Parangipettai) with Gudugudupakari, directed by Anitha Santhanam

Her first film venture is the Cannes 2015 Palme'd Or winner " Dheepan" directed by the French director Jacques Audiard, where she played the female protagonist, *Yalini*, a Srilankan refugee, in France, struggling to make peace with life.

### **Report on the workshop:**

The Collaborative workshop between the students of the Govt. College of Fine Arts, Chennai and Kumbakonam happened over two days. For the Student's Biennale the student from both the College are working on building a labour archive. They have individually and as a group researched and developed their ideas. This workshop became a time for them to share their ideas and establish a common location between the two schools. The two days also became a time from them to build new relationships and develop projects together.

The workshop started with discussions on Contemporary Art by looking at images of art works from the Kochi Biennale in detail. They also shared their views and the discussion moved towards their own work and its meanings. They formed smaller groups to discuss their individual and collective projects. The day finally ended with a group discussion on 'labour' and visualizing the exhibition.

On the second day Kalieswari Srinivasan, an actor based in Chennai interacted with the students. She spoke about the art practices and what it means to internalize an experience and respond through the body. She spoke of developing devised performances and how it can be presented. Discussions on the body, emotion and space developed. The students actively engaged by asking questions and discussing. Kalieswari introduced them to the idea of a 'people's library'. The proposition was to imagine ourselves as a book of memories, stories, histories and incidents. The students had to each create a table of contents listing the chapters in the book. Then the content was exchanged and each student could ask for a chapter to be performed to the 'book' of whose content they have. This developed into an interesting exchange of stories and the idea of a performative library developed. The students shared personal stories, imagined stories; some did drawing in response to being asked to perform a chapter. The students as part of their 'labour archive' are working on building a library of Artist books. The performative exercise opened new possibilities of exploring the self and layers of stories within each of us.

The rest of the day went into detailed discussion about each one's understanding on how to work on their projects. They helped each other and identified common projects that they could work on. The two days was time well spent on forming a Collective of students within which they are able to develop their own ideas and to also explore the possibilities of presenting these visually.

### **Images of the workshop:**



## **Workshop 2**

### **Workshop with Photographer P A. Madhavan**

**Workshop held at: 'Sundravilas', No.15, Bishop Lane, Vepery, Chennai-600007**

**Date: 13-9-2016**

**Number of participating students:** 9 Students (Govt. College of Fine Arts)

1.Kameshwaran	4.Saranraj	7.Priya
2.Thalamuthu	5.Sinduja	8. Kamal
3.Padmapriya	6.Sandhya	9.Moovendiran

**Schedule of the workshop:** To briefly understand the history of 'Colonial Photography' and learning Cyanotype Photography.

#### **Resource Person/s with brief bio:**

Pa. Madhavan, is the Executive Director of the Goa Centre for Alternative photography (Goa-CAP), a not-for-profit, state-of-the-art research and artistic space dedicated exclusively to photography. A firm believer of Gandhian principles, Madhavan started working as a documentary photographer, travelled around India documenting mining industry and its intrusion in the environment, tribal's' lives and their culture. After receiving a research grant from India Foundation for the Arts (IFA), he pursued a research project on Daguerreotype and Alternative Photography followed by studying photography in Paris and Peru. Presently he dedicates his entire time to Goa-CAP doing research, curating shows and promoting alternative photography in South Asia.

#### **Report on the workshop:**

The students of the Govt. College of Fine Arts, Chennai are working with different dimensions of the College's history. They have been researching and collecting resources that they are exploring and interpreting. In this context the College has had a locked up archive that has many rumours and stories associated with it. It is a collection of memories, what people have heard and seen. The students are in the process of creating an 'imagined archive'. This imagined archive is going to take the shape of a labour archive. They are in the process of developing this archive or museum. This archive has the history of the College/City, imagined histories and personal histories.

In 1855 the Industrial School of Arts, as it was called had one of the earliest Photography Departments in Southeast Asia. The Department was very active and documentation work was undertaken for the Archaeological Survey of India. Numerous photographs of 'natives' and their culture was produced. The students have a collection of images of these photographs.

Madhavan of Goa CAP is an expert on the history of Photography. He helped students understand the images and its construction. He presented the history of Photography, the evolution of the camera and the how it was used/manipulated to record history. He got the students to explore the composition, content and the 'Colonial perspective' of these photographs. They discussed about recreating some of the photographs in their own context and what it would mean to be 'performing' for such photographs to be taken.

Madhavan spoke about the possibilities of Alternate Photography and introduced the different techniques. He introduced Cyanotype printing- one of the old and easiest contact printing techniques. It is a technique that is used for creating blue prints. The students had a hands on session in mixing the chemicals and learning basic darkroom techniques. They made prints of photographs they had taken and also of a series of tools they had collected. As part of the labour archive they wanted to exhibit the cyanotype prints of the tools. They used a range of tool starting from everyday tools to specialized artist tools.

In the end of the day we discussed about their experience and the conceptual series of works they had created together.

### **Quotes from students:**

"It was really good experience while doing cyanotype workshop...Madhavan Sir taught us how to do those things well I came to know about some photography methods also. Was really nice..."- **Sinduja, Final Year, Painting, Chennai**

"Working for Kochi Biennale is really a great experience as we students got an extraordinary space to talk and think in such a way we haven't before, where new ideas and artworks pop up with everyone. Though we are final year students we actually don't have such place to explore art. We have had amazing workshops and that made us to move on to next level from 'students' and these made everyone to get their answer for what is art? Thank you for giving us this great opportunity...!"- **Padamapriya, Final Year, Painting Student, Chennai**

### **Images of the workshop:**

### **Acknowledgments**

This project has come together because of a lot of warmth from individuals and organizations....

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