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Bharati Kala Mahavidyalaya, Pune

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**Workshop 1: Self-critique and the
significance of process in an art students' life**

Artists, in their own ways, are constantly practicing, refining, and developing their art practice, continually pushing and striving to make better art. Throughout this repetitive shedding of skin, what happens to old pieces of work that the artist now looks back at and silently rejects? What happens to one's own 'bad art', and could it be called so if it serves as the steps towards making 'better' art? How are these opinions about rejected artwork formed, and in what context? How does an artist's eye train itself to be discerning when it comes to one's own art? Is that training somewhat innate, just a process that every creative being goes through, or is it honed and molded in formal institutions?

19 students of Bharati Kala Mahavidyalaya engaged in a week-long intense discussion at TIFA Working Studios about subjective and objective complexities of so-called 'bad art'. The workshop encouraged them to critique their own art confidently by bringing forward what they viewed as their least remarkable works of art, discussing the stories behind them, and what brought forth the opinion that they now hold about these works. Through both intimate and large group discussions and games, they began to track their own progress as artists, and reflected on the changes that have taken place during the formative years of joining their art institution, or due to one's socio-economic or psychosocial environment, or many more factors put together. A significant element that was mulled over was the

simultaneous pressure and aspiration of creating 'contemporary art'. Local artists and researchers Vaibhav Raj Shah, Shrenik Mutha, and Noopur Desai mentored the students throughout the length of this workshop, sharing with them their own experiences with failure and process. Desai also presented a talk specifically on the aspect of failure in performance art, both in a global and local context.

In parallel, the week involved the rather difficult task of planning an exhibition for these so-called 'unimpressive' artworks. Students set about tackling tough questions, such as: How does one exhibit a piece of art that one isn't necessarily happy with any more? Will the audience see the flaws that the artist sees in his or her own work? Is there even a need for the audience see these flaws? Why should these works even deserve an exhibition? And then, what would the purpose of such an exhibition even be?

The students successfully collaborated to come up with 'Dissection of the Process', an activity that involves them grinding what they deem their least impressive works of art.

Grinding their artworks to dust is a violent, painful act for them. Yet, I believe it encompasses our intense workshop wonderfully by revealing an openness towards letting go of past artistic attachments (both tangible and not) and simultaneously, by embracing the creation of dust particles as giving life to a new work of art, acknowledging their role in one's practice.

Dept. of Fine Arts, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad
Workshop 2: Reimagining a class photograph
10 – 18 August, 2016

A constant in most (if not all) formal institutions, whether academic or professional, includes an annual group photograph, usually taken at the end of the year. These images are packed with connotations of order, discipline, hierarchy, pride, camaraderie, and nostalgia, all rolled into one. During this workshop, art students in Aurangabad explored the notions of these photographs, placing their personal academic into the picture. The process involved opening up and sharing of stories of their primary site of learning with one another.

The workshop, which took place on the university grounds and department studios, attempted to dig into the significance of art institutions in the state, and in parallel, brought about the importance of informal sites that the students frequented, such as the local canteen and tea stall, nearby caves and hills, monuments from the Mughal era, and other popular spots, in the development of their art practice.

Together, we looked at archival class photos of Slade School of Art, London, the earliest available one dating from 1905, and also of both casual and formally posed for images taken of artist groups in India, including those of the Bengal 'School' in the late 19th century, the Progressive Artists' Group in the 1940s and 50s in Mumbai, and Group 1890, in the 1960s in Bhavnagar. Researcher Noopur Desai gave a presentation on photographic practice in the country, and specifically, on the use of photos by Indian artists and photographers throughout the years.

The intimate workshop resulted in the students painting a powerful picture of the state of art institutions. They broke out of the medium of photography and presented their sturdy squeaky class lockers, marked with names, numbers, forgotten locks, and rusted time, as their Class Photograph. Having over 1500 kilometers, these heavy creatures now sit silently in a room in Fort Kochi as part of the Students' Biennale.

Govt. Chitrakala Mahavidyalaya, Nagpur

Workshop 3: Research and collaborative community art practice

25 to 31 August, 2016

Six art students from Nagpur travelled to a neighbouring village Paradsingha in late August to explore mediums and processes that they were unfamiliar but interested in. They were students of painting at art school, and had kept their brush strokes limited mainly to the canvas or paper. At Paradsingha, then, they were given a physical and mental space to experiment with things like site-specific art, on-ground research, collaboration, and engaging with the surrounding community.

Local Nagpur artists and activists Shweta Bhattad and Lalit Vikamshi are both involved in public performance art and large-scale land art with strong social messages such as addressing the farmer's suicide epidemic in Maharashtra. Their practice heavily relies on the involvement of the local community, creating a strong sense of solidarity for the causes they take up. Both Shweta and Lalit, invested in creating alternative spaces for art students in the city, were eager to be involved in this workshop, and as a result, offered to host it at Paradsingha, Shweta's native village and the site for her land and community art initiatives.

Many of the participants had grown up in villages similar to Paradsingha, and so were very familiar with navigating their way through the spaces, the food and the local dialect. The days began with long walks through the neighbourhood with local children, who effectively became guides as well as collaborators in art, and the afternoons were spent indoors under the fan writing and reflecting on their experiences of the morning. We held long discussions with one another about our individual art practice, how we got interested in making art, subjects that we dealt with in our work, and future endeavors beyond art school. Shweta gave a detailed presentation of her work and the art projects that she had initiated in Paradsingha, and Lalit conducted a few sessions encompassing pushing one's boundaries as a contemporary artist.

Each student ended up making relationships with a cross-section of the Paradsingha community, and through regular conversations, basic ethnographic research and hands-on collaboration, dug into subjects they were contemplating. These included the male gaze, domestic work and gender, existential musings on the life of an artist, old age and respect, alternative mapping techniques, and children's art. All of them explored these threads in the form of installations, performances, drawing, photography, and video, some of which will be recreated in January for the Biennale.

The workshop ended with the participants and local youth going into a nearby forest to see another artist's unfinished work with big stones in the forest clearing. The plan was to either finish what the other artist had started, or do something new, and everyone chose the latter. What was created was a simple, poignant expression of the entire workshop experience and a dialogue with the environment. Around thirty large stones were gathered together to form an inviting circle under the shade of some trees. Sitting on the stones and a few pebbles in hand, the students began tapping, knocking, and banging on the stones to create an echoing rhythm in the forest. Twenty minutes into the music, rainclouds broke above us, and yet not one person flinched or stopped playing.

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