

PROJECTS / PROCESSES VOLUME IV

Research and Writing from SAF 2017

commissioned by





About Projects/Processes

Projects / Processes is a new initiative to publish commissioned research essays, longform writing, and in-depth criticism that explore the ideas and processes behind select curatorial projects at Serendipity Arts Festival. Over two years, the Festival has accumulated a rich database of creative energies and partnerships. As an eight-day long event, the Festival is a platform for multidisciplinary collaboration and cultural innovation, and has commissioned over 70 new works across the visual arts and performance since its inception in 2016. The Projects / Processes series offers an opportunity to give some of these works and the stories that they tell an afterlife, through a deeply engaged look at how they came together and their significance to the discourse of contemporary art in India moving forward. Each volume comprises essays covering distinct projects that stand in some dialogue with each other, through the questions they raise and the thematic landscape they cover.

About Serendipity Arts Festival

Serendipity Arts Festival is a multi-disciplinary arts event set over a period of eight days in December in the vibrant settings of Panaji, Goa. Curated by a panel of eminent artists and institutional figures, this festival is a long-term cultural project that hopes to affect positive change in the arts in India on a large scale.

Serendipity Arts Festival 2017 experimented with site, form, scale, and display, featuring over 70 projects including more than 40 projects commissioned specifically for the Festival, alongside a line-up of scintillating programmes spanning music, dance, theatre, visual arts and culinary arts. In addition to the curated events, we believe in collaborations that can give the Festival varied perspectives. As a result, SAF 2017 saw an exciting array of Special Projects which highlight our institutional collaborations.

The Festival also attempts to address pressing issues such as arts education, patronage culture, interdisciplinary discourse and accessibility to the arts. This intensive programme of exhibitions and performances is accompanied by spaces for social and educational engagement.

About Serendipity Arts Foundation

Serendipity Arts Foundation is an arts and cultural development Foundation created to encourage and support the arts as a significant contributor to civil society. It aims to promote new creative strategies, artistic interventions, and cultural partnerships that are responsive and seek to address the social, cultural and environmental milieu of South Asia. Committed to innovation, SAF intends to promote and create platforms for creativity, providing the wider public with a unique source of contemporary art and culture. SAF programmes are designed and initiated through collaborations with partners across a multitude of fields, each intervention created using the arts to impact education, create social initiatives, foster community development, and explore both interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary in the arts, with a special focus on South Asia.



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**The Pano Bhaju:
Influences & Inspirations**

Curated by Wendell Rodricks



Curatorial Note

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, Goa was connected by trade and a cultural osmosis to places long-established, as early as the 16th century, by Portuguese sea routes on the West and East coasts of India.

The Pano Bhaju, also known as Torhop (or Thoddop) Baz or Fota Quimao, is a garment that appeared at the dawn of the 20th century, worn primarily in South Goa to dance the Goan Mando. Historians, ethnographic observers, and social documenters speak both derisively and glowingly about the Pano Bhaju. The ceremonial Torhop Baz worn during the Mando dance was made from velvet or silk, red, blue or green in colour, and embroidered with gold (rarely with silver threads). A white, yellow, or blue 'fato' stole was draped on the shoulder; the socks had to be white and the 'chinello' velvet mules embroidered in gold thread. The ensemble was graced with a fan, with elaborate, sparkling gold jewellery adorning the neck, ears, hands, and hair, which enhanced the beauty of the dancing lady.

While the locals look at this garment as quintessentially Goan, its history lies in multiple inspirations and modifications that were made to suit society at the time. The ensemble is an adaptation of many costumes: from the Far East, countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Burma, and China combined a sarong or lungi worn under a blouse to form the garment's inspirational foundation. Sri Lanka, Kerala, and Northeast India have their own versions of the sarong. Across

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the mountains, Persia, China, and Central Asia influenced the pattern pieces and embroidery motifs of the Pano Bhaju. Japan, on the Pacific edge, also provided motifs and gold thread to the garment, in addition to the white socks worn with a kimono, which also appear with the Goan costume.

Sourcing garments from these countries, designer Wendell Rodricks travels across the sea and the silk route to celebrate the complex history and influences that create one of Goa's most iconic garments of the last century. Using photographs, illustrations, and interactive elements, he pieces together the history of a dramatic, richly adorned, and also humbly practical ensemble that washed across seas and land to India's golden state.





Mixed, Fused, and Rehashed Cultural Hybridity Through Ethnic Dress

Kanika Anand

In October 2017 the Museum of Modern Art, New York hosted its first fashion exhibition since 1944 titled *Items: Is Fashion Modern?* The exhibit's curator, Paola Antonelli, began by asking herself the question: What garments changed the world? She went on to gather over 111 'items' from across the globe that were iconic to a culture, or that represented a revolutionary or lasting trend. A Chanel gown is placed alongside Chinese Cheongsam dresses, Converse All Star shoes, Calvin Klein underwear and two saris—a khadi cotton sari acquired from textile scholar Rta Chishti, and a woven silk sari lent by designer Sanjay Garg.

The exhibit not only marks the institution's interest in 'catching up' with other internationally successful exhibitions of costume and fashion, but the manner of its making introduces the idea of a catalogue of global wardrobe. The exhibition does not follow any chronology or hierarchy, flattening out the differences between couture and common, East and West, in an attempt to represent the most ubiquitous form of the items' respective typologies.¹ Antonelli rightly observes the influence of cross-pollination by physical and cultural migrations, appropriation and the disseminating power of media, both old and new, on fashion,

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facilitating one of the more productive conversations engaging ‘high’ and ‘low’ art.

In a parallel trajectory, Wendell Rodricks’ curated project *Histories: Goan Costume* was imagined, an amalgamation of ten objects related to Goan costumes, presented at the 2016 edition of the Serendipity Arts Festival. The objects included were a photograph of the Palaeolithic Mother Goddess at Pansaimol in South Goa, a Shantadurga sari, a Narakasura effigy, the woven Kunbi sari, a gold thread (*zari*) embroidered turban, the pano bhaju garment, a Buddhist sculpture, pieces of gold ornaments reflecting the Daivaidyana golden heritage and a series of shoes- *zottim* (leather sandals), chabedeo (sandals made from the Kumbyo tree bark) and shoes designed by a Goan shoemaker, Edwin Pinto.

For dress and ornaments to be included as ‘item’ or ‘object’ allows certain fluidity in interpreting their cultural value and punctuates their role within the larger ecosystem of clothing design.

It is popular belief that tailored clothing was introduced in India by Arab traders and colonizing Mughals in the medieval period, although there is evidence of women already wearing stitched *cholis* (blouses) and *ghaghrras* (skirts)². Up until then, cloth was enjoyed as both material and garment, draped in a variety of styles. In Goa, the tribal kunbi sari stands out as one of the most commonly worn pieces of clothing prior to Portuguese colonization in the sixteenth century. Echoing the zeitgeist, the pano bhaju stood on the cusp of fashion

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and culture with its rich medley of cuts, fabrics and stitches accompanied by gold jewelry and rich accessories, thereby making it an ensemble worthy of dedicated study. In his book *Moda Goa: History and Style*, 2012 Rodricks ponders the interesting transition from a sari to this alien dress form that emerges with a very modern silhouette for its time.

The pano bhaju ... mixes the graceful femininity of Indian garments with the modern practicality of Western garments with ease and panache. It is this very quality that makes the pano bhaju an ideal fashion statement for our times.

What we define as fashion and what we claim as modern are harnessed in the presentation of the blouse-sarong-stole combination of the pano bhaju, curated as a craft exhibit of the 2017 Serendipity Arts Festival. Positioned quite directly as an art historical investigation of an attire that was evolved by the Goans to resolve the climatically unsuitable clothing introduced by the Portuguese, the costume exhibit's categorization as a craft discipline and the project's curation by one of the country's more prominent fashion designers is critical to understanding the attitudes toward clothing design and fashion today. The exhibit is intended as more than a display of craft, which no doubt, is extremely refined and collates the labourious work of many a hand, but also explores the manner in which people identify with clothing. Moreover, within the larger oeuvre of fine art, the relative accessibility afforded by fashion, and the ability of clothing to connect with

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people - to admire, delight or seduce, consigns it to a more relatable place in the collective memory of the people. In assessing any new invention or innovation, arising either as an evolved format of a continuing tradition, as a re-evaluation of it, or a combination of these traits, cultural hybridity is contextually defined. Developed while under the Portuguese colonial rule, the pano bhaju represents the reinvention of various designs and materials of foreign clothing into a fusion garment that finally comes to be recognized as traditional Goan attire. Like with Antonelli's democratic curatorial direction towards the display of items from both the East and the West, Rodricks' claim of the pano bhaju epitomizing what we now know as "fusion garments" reflects a growing tendency to correct the Western-centric narrative on global fashion within the larger exercise of exhibition-making today. Rodricks' own design sensibility is rooted in the idea of fusing indigenous fabrics with local skill for an international market, comfortably complementing the local-gone-global fashion moment.

A series of mannequins draped in ethnic costumes from across the Far East and South Asia are lined up on a trapezoid shaped platform, the pano bhaju being the first garment one views on entering. The walls of the rectangular room are decorated in patterns of red pigment inspired by the kaavi mural art form popular in the Konkan belt, a nostalgic reminder of a now-lost grandeur. The four vitrines placed in three corners display

finery without which the pano bhaju, a garment worn to dance the mando, would be incomplete.

José Pereira describes the mando as a dance of stylized courtship in his book, *Song of Goa*, 2000³. Drawn from two eighteenth-century European dances—the *minuet* and the *contredanse*—the mando dance is a dalliance that fuses courtroom dancing with social dancing. The mando songs are sung in Konkan and are usually narrations of love and longing. There is however, no visual reference to the dance form itself (besides a mention in the wall text); the exhibit focusing solely on the garment, the influences and inspiration behind the version of the ensemble that exists today.

All materials communicate a message. For dance, costumes signal a certain mood amongst other things, and are a visual device differentiating social classes. Without prompting the viewer to imagine the dress for dance, the impact of the costume on the performing body remains largely unseen. For instance, the narrow skirt permitting only short steps that compliment the sway of the waist, the flutter of the decorative hand fan or the movement of the hair chains while dancing are not revealed. On quizzing Rodricks on his scenographic vision for the project and the reasons for excluding the reference to dance, he explains:

The pano bhaju in its most resplendent form was worn to dance the Goan Mando. There were however, other versions that were worn for Mass, weddings, parties... even at home. As far as I have researched, there is no transition from the time the costume was introduced

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in the late 1890's to today. The garment has stayed the same in principle but nowadays; inexpensive fabric and less real zari gold embroidery are used. The present versions worn for entertainment and Mando Festivals are poor imitations of the original.

Rodricks also sheds some light on the ensemble's categorization within the discipline of craft rather than dance or theatre, at the Festival.

The pano bhaju, in its original intent, is a performance garment. Quite like the tutu is used for ballet. The big difference is that unlike a ballet tutu, other versions of the pano bhaju were worn in daily life. It is akin to a Japanese Kimono worn for theatre or royal performances and other simpler kimono versions used in normal life. I was recently shown a cotton pano bhaju, a wrap skirt worn at home in the 1800's, by a friend's grandmother. It is in simple cotton, block printed in Gujarat. But it has the same lines and designs as the original decorative pano bhaju version.

The pano bhaju was worn by upper class women or, according to A.B Braganza Pereira⁴, by the richer lower class. The colours of the kunbi sari –red, black and white–carry through into the nineteenth century pano bhaju. With an open jacket (bhaju) made of red or maroon velvet or damask silk and embroidered

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in gold thread, a silk sarong skirt and a linen or silk stole, the pano bhaju was by no means an inexpensive garment. The jacket's embroidery was a *mélange* of Chinese floral and Persian arabesque motifs, the wraparound pleated skirt (pano) was occasionally also embroidered and the stole (*fato*) was always draped on one shoulder. The white chest covering inside emerged as a later development in keeping with the modesty desired by the Portuguese. On their feet, women wore low-heeled velvet shoes, which Rodricks explains as the Goans' stylistic negotiation between the Parsi *sapat* and the Peranakan beaded slippers. The ensemble however, is incomplete without the exquisite brooches (three to four worn together at a time), gold-chained hairpins that dangled from an updo or chignon, the ornamental fan held while dancing and delicate gold jewelry that could not be displayed because of security concerns. Rodricks dates the popularity of the pano bhaju to the 1920s- the end of the First World War steering renewed freedom for men and women in both industry and society, resulting in a never-before-seen assertion of fashion equality.

The pano bhaju in its original form was made of velvet or silk, embroidered in gold thread. The fabric was outsourced from British India or more likely Europe as velvets were not made in Goa. The pano bhaju could be three or four pieces constituting the ensemble. In some cases the jacket was closed and did not have an inner blouse. Goan cobblers locally made the velvet *chenilos* shoes. Whether the gold embroidered sections were made in Goa or in India, the garment was sewn by Goan

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tailors in the state. The gold accessories were all made by Goan Daivaydana Brahmin goldsmiths who have been crafting gold for centuries.

For Serendipity 2017, I wanted to show the influences and inspirations of the Goan pano bhaju. Obviously, this garment was not a creation of a few people or a single person. The installation proved that the ensemble came from the Far East. When we look at the silhouette and styles of garments as far away as China to the nearer Mallacan Straits, a clear inspirational line is obvious. Not just the garment itself but the accessories as well.

Cited within the exhibition are eleven costumes, elements of which were allegedly adapted to arrive at the current form of the pano bhaju. At the foot of each mannequin are black and white archival photographs of the draped ensemble, tracing its history and slight stylistic differences that reflect the wearer's rank and personality, as well as the time of the photographs. It was however, on a curated walk with Rodricks on December 22nd, 2017 that one understood the depth of his dedicated research (as detailed in his book *Moda Goa*) through time and places, bringing to life the weaving processes, the fabrics and fibers used, the cuts and their origins, the manner of draping and the friends who lent or donated these garments. While the historical evolution of the pano bhaju has been researched at length in his book *Moda Goa*, Rodricks

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deliberately excludes copious details of each element's origins from the visual format of the exhibit's display. In doing so, he prompts another question around the translation of clothing design from studio or workshop to wearer, and from text to exhibit. In what ways does the curator or designer influence the understanding of the traditional garment, especially when introduced within a historical narrative?

16th century Goa was placed at the center of trade routes from both land and sea. Rodricks' curatorial note informs our understanding better.

The ensemble is an adaptation of many costumes. From the Far East, countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Burma and China combine a sarong or lungi worn under a blouse that form the inspirational foundation to create the pano bhaju. Sri Lanka, Kerala and North East India have their versions of the sarong. Across the mountains, Persia, China and Central Asia influence the pattern pieces and embroidery motifs of the Goan pano bhaju. Japan, on the Pacific edge, also provides motifs and gold thread grandeur to the pano bhaju; apart from the white socks worn with a kimono that appear with the Goan costume.

The sarong is a garment worn by both men and women and has variations that are named and worn differently in different regions along the Silk route. In South East Asia, it is longyi in Myanmar, sampot in Cambodia and malong in the Philippines.

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In the South Asian and Arab peninsulas, it is the chatta mundu in Kerala and the lungi in Tamil Nadu, izaars in Saudi Arabia and wizaars in Oman. In East Africa, sarongs worn by men are referred to as kangas, those by women as kikois. In the Pacific Islands, it is known as the pareo in Tahiti, kikepa in Hawaii, laplap in Papua New Guinea and lava lava in Samoa and the Solomon Islands.⁵

Chatta Mundu, Cochin, Kerala, India

The traditional dress of Syrian Christian women in Kerala was the same as that worn by the women in Kerala: a tight mundu, or white cloth, wound around the waist, distinguished by a fan-shaped pleat behind. A loose short blouse or chatta is worn on top, sometimes with a thin, gold - bordered white stole worn over the left shoulder.

Pohm Skirt Wrap & Shawl, Kohima, Nagaland, India

Strongly indicative of their social position, even to this day, the attire of the Pohm hunting tribe in Nagaland comprises of a skirt and shawl of thick homespun cotton yarn, dyed in red with indigenous dyes. On the top, women wore a simple white bodice and a shawl-wrap. The garment on display was specially woven for the exhibit.

Parsi Gara Sari, Chak Chak, Yazd, Iran & Udvada, Gujarat, India

Parsi Gara saris were introduced by immigrant Persian women who settled in Gujarat and took to wearing Indian clothing as early as 650 AD. Known for their exquisite embroidery, a combination of Chinese and Indian stitch, with motifs drawn

from nature- both Persian and Chinese styled floral patterns and birds, it was typically sewn with white silk thread on dark base fabrics of black, violet, red or dark green.

Barot Saya, Manila, Philippines

The national dress of the Philippines consists of a blouse (barot), skirt (saya) and scarf (*pañuelo*). Also a three-part ensemble, like the pano bhaju, and dating to the same period, it goes through its own transformation to become the maria clara and finally resolves itself as the one-piece terno. The dress on display is woven of pineapple fiber, as is customary in Philippines, and has a high-necked collar version of *pañuelo*. The lady in the photograph wears a similar version of the dress called mestizo- made from a mix of Spanish and Philippine lace.

Chutthai, Bangkok, Thailand

The chutthai is a long tubular skirt with two front pleats, a blouse and a breast cloth worn over one shoulder. The skirt is woven, in this case of silk and is held in place by a belt. A breast cloth is draped on one shoulder and is often made of net or metallic thread.

Burmese Lyongi, Rangoon, Burma (Yangon, Myanmar)

Similar to the Thai skirt is the Burmese lyongi, made of material stitched in a circular fashion, with cloth for a waistband. It is folded in front to form a deep pleat and tucked in at the side, left or right. The traditional blouse has an overlapping front, and a flap that is buttoned up at the side. A stole is draped over one shoulder, often pinned with a decorative brooch⁶.

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Cheongsam, Peking/ Beijing, China

A result of the integration of Manchu and Western styles of dress, the Cheongsam (or qipao) became popular in the 1920s, owing to two factors: 1) the unification of China in the mid-seventeenth century that allowed for a single fashionable garment, and 2) centuries of trade between China and the West. The traditional long gown of the Manchus was more fitted and tailors experimented with the shape of the collar, length of sleeve and height of the slit in the skirt. Known today as the sheath dress that represents Chinese modernity, it has been appropriated by Western designers as representative of the exotic East.

The babas and the noynas of Malaysia and Singapore were an ethnic group that formed when Chinese traders intermarried with the ethnic populations of Malacca. The following garments bear markings of their intercultural exchanges in the resultant transference of stylistic elements.

Baju Kurung, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

This garment, meaning 'long dress' in Malay is often acknowledged as the precursor to the kebaya. The top blouse is the exact shape of the kurta, worn with a sarong, and a headscarf in keeping with Islamic rules of dress. It is usually white or off-white in colour and has little or no embroidery.

Peranakan Chinese/ Baba/ Noyna/ Strait Chinese Costume, Malacca, Malaysia

This garment, also known as the noyna kebaya evolved from

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the more conservative baju kurung, and comprised of a short sheer fabric blouse often decorated with lace or cutwork and embroidered floral motifs such as roses, peonies and orchids. It is worn over a camisole and secured with three interlinked brooches. The sarong is also patterned, or embroidered. Preferred colours were reds, greens and blues, unlike the pale colours seen in the baju kurung. Peranakan women were known for their exquisite embroidery and beadwork, exemplified in the slippers dating to that period.

Sarong Kebaya, Singapore

Like the Malaccan noyna kebaya, the sarong kebaya of Singapore had a sheer blouse held in place by three ornamental brooches. The longer length and the paler, usually white coloured blouse of the sarong kabaya marked the difference between the two garments.

Kebaya, Djakarta, Indonesia/ Java

Javanese women are believed to have been the first to assimilate the kebaya from the Peranakan Chinese. The long sleeved blouses, either of hip length, or knee length with batik or woven skirts are recognized today as Indonesia's national dress.

Wendell Rodricks affirms the inclusion of a costume exhibit within the format of SAF and the need for similar cultural objects and living traditions to be explored via such platforms. He spoke of the responsibility of curators, historians and

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writers of culture to remind the public of our collective past.

Over ninety percent of the visitors to Serendipity, including a large number of Goans over the age of fifty had never heard of, nor seen a pano bhaju. This is because the garment was exclusive to a small area around Margao city, mainly in the villages of Curchorim, Raia and Loutolim. The rest of Goa was not among this elite group who wore the pano bhaju to dance the Mando.

Goan Costume does not have a seamless narrative. There are many parallel stories to be recounted and shared. Weaving threads from both costume design intended for dance, and clothing design indicating social status and gender relations, the pano bhaju suitably reflects the nature of history, as it is perceived, and vividly draws on connections between cultures and places in a single frame of time. As a socio-cultural reference, the exhibition enriches the viewer's visual experience by marking the cultural value of the pano bhaju as a piece of heritage, rather than a simple artifact of clothing. With climate, trade exchanges and the persistence of tradition in the face of colonial encounters factoring into the evolution of the blouse-sarong-stole ensemble, the pano bhaju exhibit is a mirror of one's collective history, woven and knotted through the region's past.



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Fig.4



Fig.5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

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Captions

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Exhibition view

Fig 1

Exhibition View

Fig 2

The origins of Pano Bhaju mapped across South Asia, South East Asia and Iran

Fig 3 & 4

From L- R: The Chatta Mundu (Cochin, Kerela, India), the Pohm Skirt Wrap and Shawl (Kohima, Nagaland, India), Lyongi (Rangoon, Burma/ Yangon, Myanmar), Chutthai (Bangkok, Thailand)

Fig 5

Exhibit of decorative brooches

Fig 6

From L- R: A pair of Parsi Sapat velvet shoes, the traditionally embroidered chinelos worn with the Pano Bhaju (dating to the Persian and Mughal courts) and the Peranakan Chinese beaded chinelos. The photograph in the vitrine is of a pair of velvet chinelos covered in wrought silver from the Philippines.

Fig 7

Archival photographs loaned by Goan families

Fig 8

European folding fans were inspired by prototypes brought to Europe by merchant traders and religious orders who had set up colonies in China and Japan. While their montures (sticks and guards) were made of materials such as ivory, mother of pearl, and tortoiseshell, often carved, pierced or ornamented with silver, gold, and precious stones, the leaves were well painted by craftsmen who gradually amalgamated into guilds. Essential to the Pano Bhaju, the exhibit of fans and an umbrella has been donated to The Moda Goa Museum, Goa by Shantanu Goenka, Kolkata

Fig 9

Archival photographs loaned by Goan families

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Biographics

Kanika Anand is a Delhi based art writer and curator. She holds a Master's degree in History of Art from the National Museum Institute, India and has been curatorial fellow at the Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, 2012-13. She has worked extensively with galleries and alternative spaces such as Exit Art and the Gagosian Gallery in the United States, the Centre National d'Art Contemporain in France and with Exhibit 320 and Gallery Espace in India. She is the Founder of Parked-At, a roving exhibition platform, presenting alternative modes of viewing, engagement and participation and is the Exhibition Coordinator for the first edition of the Indian Ceramics Triennale, *Breaking Ground: Jawahar Kala Kendra*, Jaipur, 2018.

A designer with an international presence, Mumbai-born **Wendell Rodricks** has presented his unique garments, inspired by Goa and India at major fashion events worldwide. Rodricks was the first Indian designer to be invited to show at IGEDO in Germany (1995), Dubai Fashion Week (2001), Malaysia Fashion Week (2002), Prêt-à-Porter in Paris (2007), and BioFach in Nuremberg, Germany (2012). In 2007, the Confederation of Indian Industries invited him to showcase two fashion shows in Bryant Park, New York to celebrate the 60th year of India's Independence. Rodricks was instrumental in planning the first ever Lakme India Fashion Week in 2000 and guiding it in an advisory capacity during its formative years. In 2000, 2003 and again in 2008 he was honoured as the 'finale' artist for LFW. In 2010, Wendell revived the weaving of the traditional Goan Kunbi

Sari, a two-year project involving identifying and training weavers in the use of sari looms. This unique sari and other garments using the same weave, were showcased at Wills Lifestyle India Fashion Week.

In 2014, Rodricks was awarded the Padma Shri for Art (Fashion Design), honoured by the All India Konkani Parishad, given the Rainbow Warrior Award by Kashish Film Festival, and conferred the distinction of Knight in the Order of Arts and Letters by The Ministry of Culture and Communication of France.

Rodricks is the author of *Moda Goa – History and Style* and *The Green Room*.



**Now You See It!: The
Invisible River of
Konkani Surrealism**

Curated by Vivek Menezes



Curatorial Note

From the very beginning, the artists of Goa have contributed disproportionately to what is now recognized as modern and contemporary Indian art. The very first classes at JJ School of Art in colonial Bombay of the 1860s were stacked with students from the Estado da India. In 1870, its director boasted about the extraordinary proficiency of his “Goanese” pupils. Later, its star “native” faculty member was António Xavier Trindade, who was also the first Indian to win the gold medal at the annual competition of the Bombay Art Society.

That prizewinning 1920 painting can be viewed just a short walk away from this exhibition, in the public gallery space of the Fundação Oriente. ‘Flora’ is a landmark achievement not only because a son of the Konkan painted so marvellously in the European style, but because of the audacity and panache with which the subject is portrayed. This is the artist’s own wife, depicted in a manner quite unlike what you might imagine an Indian woman of the times might consider suitable. Similar paradigm-shifting and genre-bending has remained a hallmark of the art and artists of Goa, from the spectacularly beautiful sari-clad Madonnas of Angelo da Fonseca to the considered iconoclasm of Francis Newton Souza and Vasudeo Gaitonde in the Progressive Artist’s Movement of the late 1940s and early 1950s. But even as these geniuses emerged one after another from the cultural milieu of this tiny riparian sliver of the Konkan coastline, their powerful bonds and relationships to each other, and to the complex many-layered

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culture of their homeland has remained obscured, and barely acknowledged. Their collective profound influence on the supremely skilled artists who have continued to rise unstoppably from Goa is even less understood, and often flatly denied.

Now You See It: The Invisible River of Konkani Surrealism is a collaborative effort, and collective labour of love that makes a compelling argument for the Goan artistic world view.

About the highly evolved built heritage of the state, the late architectural historian (who was partly responsible for bringing the Trindade archive to rest in Fontainhas) Paulo Varela Gomes wrote, it is not “the end-result of a compromise, but the affirmative artistic statement of a cultural position.”

This certainly applies to the artworks in this wide-ranging exhibition showcasing the output of three generations of marvellous practitioners, who together make the case for Konkani Surrealism.

Precisely ten years ago, Ranjit Hoskote first made a sophisticated case for the art and artists of Goa to be recognized as a coherent whole, an “invisible river” which “has fed into the wider flow of Indian art but has not always been recognised as so doing.” With their dedicated efforts in *Now You See It*, the artists of Goa have insisted on that acknowledgement, which can no longer be denied.

Artists Aadhi Vishal, Bhisaji Gadekar, Chaitali Morajkar, Conrad Pinto, Dhondu Krishna Kedar, Hitesh Pankar, Kalidas Mhamal, Karishma D’Souza, Kaushalya Gadekar, Laxman Pai, Loretta Joyce Pinto, Manjunath Naik, Mohan Naik, Nirupa Naik, Pradeep Naik, Pritesh Naik, Raj Bhandare, Rajesh Chodankar,

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Rajeshree Thakker, Ramdas Gadekar, Rohit Bhosle, Ryan Francis Abreu, Sadguru Chendvankar, Sanchin Naik, Sandesh Sonu Naik, Santosh Morajkar, Shailesh Dhabolkar, Shilpa Mayenkar, Shripad Gurav, Siddarth Gosavi, Siddarth Kerkar, Sonia Rodrigues Sabharwal, Soumitrimayee Paital, Theodore Mariano Mesquita, Vaishnavi Shankwalkar, Vamona Navelkar, Vijay Bhandare, Viraj Naik, Vitesh Naik, Yolanda de Souza Kammermeier



Is My Horizon Different From Yours? The Curious Case of Goan Identity

Kanika Anand

Goa has approximately 347 villages, where the majority of the Goan population resides. The outside world often mentions Goa in terms of rave parties, trance music, beach side bashes and Russian and Israeli communes. But this is just a slice of life in some tourism-affected coastal areas. The real heart and soul of Goa is found in the villages, where people are warm and friendly, where neighbours will lend a helping hand in times of trouble, where there are long lasting friendships that span generations. Of course there are family feuds too, but by and large, people are sincere and affectionate. All manner of Indian festivals and feasts are celebrated in the village. Traditions and customs bond village folk together. There is a certain dignity and decency which is portrayed in relationships.

- Melinda Coutinho Powell: Village Vibes

The above extract is taken from the first compilation by the Goa Writers titled *inside|outside: New Writing from Goa*¹, and by its title alone puts forth one of Goa's biggest cultural peculiarities. Goa is looked at differently from the inside

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and from the outside with a handful of people who have transitioned to look through the lens both ways.

John Berger wrote of the way we see things in *Ways of Seeing*, the 1972 book adaptation of the BBC Television Series by the same name, as being affected by what we know and what we believe.

Post-colonial histories are narrated and written differently by the coloniser and the colonised, accomodating a distance between the realities seen and believed in each camp. The making of the 'other', becomes inevitable, and is constantly revised and redressed, most effectively through pedagogical theories, be it post-colonial and post-modernist, Orientalist and Occidental or ideas of nationhood and globalisation. Can Goa's otherness be explained through the reading of its colonial history under the Portuguese, as opposed to the rest of India under the British? Does the absence of a common coloniser, and a common cause to rally against, impact relations of dominance and dialogue between the colonised collectives within a nation in a manner that is similar to the binaries of colonised/coloniser or insider/outsider?

Now You See It!: The Invisible River of Konkani Surrealism is a fitting title that feeds into the insider/outsider premise of the visual art exhibition at Serendipity Arts Festival 2017, curated by Goan journalist and writer Vivek Menezes, who has spent a fair part of his career understanding and delving into this very Goan curiosity. But it was Indian poet and curator Ranjit Hoskote who Menezes credits with having made the first sophisticated argument for a Goan narrative that runs parallel to the mainstream narrative of Indian modernism. Proposed as a pilot or draft for a sequence of future exhibitions, Hoskote's

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curatorial project *Aparanta: Mapping the Invisible River* was commissioned by the Goa Tourism Development Corporation in 2007, and gathered 23 artists from Goa (including those who'd made Goa their home) at the Old Goa Medical College in Panjim.

The second part of Menezes' exhibition title, *The Invisible River of Konkani Surrealism*, draws directly from *Aparanta*, as though fitting into Hoskote's vision of the show spurring many more exhibits of Goan identity. Hoskote elaborates on not only the lack of representation of Goan art outside of Goa but also the lack of context within Goa that hindered the making of a single cohesive vision. He writes in the opening lines of his curatorial note:

Goan art has long been an invisible river, one that has fed into the wider flow of Indian art but has not always been recognized as so doing.

In his project, Menezes attempts to accommodate the lacunae felt rather unconventionally, by populating the exhibition through submissions to an open call to artists practicing in Goa. Moreover, he deconstructs the polemics of the insider/outsider discourse through surrealist notions.

This paper aims to examine, explore and revise the 'Goa situation' by looking at artistic production within the coastal state, reasons for its exclusion from the larger national narrative, and attempts made to bridge this gap. More specifically, this paper explores the range of art within the exhibition, its placement in a multi-disciplinary festival, and

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the curator's ambitious vision for this show to address far more than meets the eye, especially through the mounting of a survey-based exhibit that follows a thematic order instead of a chronological one.

According to postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, colonialism helps generate the sources of resistance that contribute to the making of a hybrid or 'in-between' culture. The convergence of cultures and people within a variety of circumstances such as trade, conquest, and conversions is a commonplace occurrence, which concerns itself with negotiating cultural confrontation and a reinterpretation of the value systems therein.

When people migrate, they take with them only a part of their total culture. As it develops and combines with the culture or cultures on the new soil, the culture that develops is both bafflingly alike and different from the parent culture.²

Had the colonial realities of Portuguese Goa from 1560- 1961 and British India from 1757-1947, created differences that great that the emerging ideas of identity and belonging coherent with a sense of nationhood were incompatible with each other? Was it because the Portuguese had penetrated deeper into the cultural psyche of the people of what was to become the smallest state of the Indian Union, that the hybrid culture that

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emerged was one that was closer to the colonizer's than to the rest of India under the British? For the Portuguese, the church served as an agency through which it could strengthen its hold over its colony. Aiding in the process of enculturation were the aggressive proselytizing and lusitanising attempts by the Portuguese in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in line with the then prevalent movement of Portuguese Inquisition. The liberalization of religious policies was undertaken only from the eighteenth century when the Portuguese realized that longer hegemonic control necessitated the adoption of persuasive action alongside coercive action in order to 'reign' in Goans who hadn't converted to Christianity. The Portuguese exhibited a different relation to the cultures they conquered. It is in the historical periods within which both colonial powers operated, that the nuanced differences of nationalism formed, for the pre-Enlightenment Portuguese colonizer chose to occidentalize or justitanize the Indian rather than orientalize as the British had attempted.³

Dr. Tristao Braganza Cunha, a prominent Indian nationalist and anti-colonial activist from Goa shed light on the psychological dominance of culture over the educated people of Goa in his essay, *The Denationalization of Goans*, 1944. He builds his arguments on his observations on the loss of both Indianness and pride of race amongst the Goans. Through the agencies of education and the press that replaced Konkani with Portuguese, and that functioned under the rigid control of the state and the Church as an arm of the Portuguese state, the Portuguese fed the people myths favoring their rule, and cultivating a 'forced Westernization'- the idea that by adopting

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Western thought and culture, they'd be superior to their fellow countrymen.

These cultural tropes influenced the means and methods of art production as well. For instance, Goa was the first colony in Asia to receive a printing press, imported in 1556 to serve Jesuit evangelism, marking the beginning of modern printmaking in India. Between 1561 and 1592, five books, embellished with historiated, ornamental woodcut initials colophon, monograms etc. were printed in Goa. This was the beginning of the printed picture in India.⁴ Therefore, it is no surprise that printmaking has remained an important medium of art in Goa. Reflecting on the divergent realities specific to Goa and to India at large, even with their many cultural similarities, Vivek Menezes speaks of Goan artists like Angelo Fonseca, who, painting in the 1940s and '50s, was ostracized for his overt subversion of Christianity. His paintings of sari-clad, brown-skinned Madonnas with indigenized angels offended the sentiments of Goan Catholics far more than those of non-Goans embroiled in the makings of national identity. Trained in Shanti Niketan under Abindranath Tagore, Fonseca painted his own reality, a version of the Goan reality that was not shared, often misunderstood, and even denied by other parts of the country.

The Konkan coast includes the coastal regions of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat and Goa; the culture of the Konkan communities being largely defined by their shared Konkani

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language. After joining the Indian Union in 1961, Goa was presented with a political proposal to merge with Maharashtra on grounds of ease of administration besides what was claimed to be linguistic and cultural similarities. The resultant Opinion Poll of 1967 concluded that Goa would be an independent state within the Indian Union and with it, the case of Goan identity emerged as one that needed to be defended.

In their 1983 book *Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger shed light on the political processes of decolonisation that weld together disparate indigenous entities into a single solidary state. In postcolonial developments, we encounter repeatedly the expedient use of 'folkloric' culture, which they outline as the projection of enlarged icons of an idealized peoplehood.⁵ While refraining to debate the adaptability of old traditions vs the invention of new ones within the context of this paper, Hobsbawm and Ranger's observations of cultural identity are significant. A culture in crisis can very easily translate into social crisis as the community's identity is derived from their sense of culture. What is also interesting is the employment of repositories of ancient materials from which to invent anew. Had the threat to social identity led to a nostalgic adaptation or invention of values amongst Goans? Could this hypothesis alongside Cunha's theory of denationalisation lend insight into the curious case of Goan identity?

A wall text from the exhibition, from Robert Newman's "The Goa Myth," reads:

While it is the job of modern historians and social

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scientists to endeavor to describe Goa as accurately as possible - now or in the past - the myths of Goa, both old and new tend to be stronger, more widespread, and more enduring. Like any other people, Goans derive part of their self-image from the views reflected back at them by others. They may absorb the views of these others as being at least partly true. If those views emanate from the realm of myth, then Goa may be known and identified, even amongst its own citizens, in a way, more mythological than real.⁶

Moreover, divulged in Hoskote's curatorial essay on *Aparanta* is cultural theorist Nancy Adajania's attempt at qualitatively outlining the Goan artistic vision.

Many Goan artists display what Nancy Adajania defines as the new folkloric imagination, a will-to-image that resists academic convention, political correctness and neo-orthodox dogma, by resorting to the fabular, the magical, the chimerical and seemingly quixotic.

It is this pulse that Menezes assumes and prescribes as Konkani Surrealism. *Now You See It: The Invisible River of Konkani Surrealism* is supported by numerous quotes by historians, writers, and thinkers, interspersed through each level of the three-storied exhibition space. Given Menezes' journalistic background, he approaches the exhibition through multiple voices across disciplines of anthropology, architecture, history and literature that each support the

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proposed thematic directions, helping give the works the context they need within an otherwise loosely held together collection.

The introduction to his exhibition states its premise through yet another voice, that of Paulo Varela Gomes.

Now You See It: The Invisible River of Konkani Surrealism is a collaborative effort, and collective labour of love, that makes a compelling argument for the Goan artistic world view. About the highly evolved built heritage of the state, the late architectural historian Paulo Varela Gomes wrote, it is not “the end-result of a compromise, but the affirmative artistic statement of a cultural position.” This certainly applies to the artworks in this wide-ranging exhibition showcasing the output of three generations of marvellous practitioners, who together make the case for Konkani Surrealism.

Menezes also quotes Gabriel García Márquez, referencing the author’s ability to interweave the mundane with the fantastical through his distinct narrative approach to magical realism. On Márquez’s writing, Salman Rushdie underscores the ‘realism’, and expands his own observations on the similarities between the Indian and Latin American realities.

In both places there was and is a conflict between the city and the village, and there are similarly profound gulfs between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, the great and the small. Both are places with a strong

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colonial history, and in both places religion is of great importance, and God is alive, and so, unfortunately, are the godly.⁷

Menezes' suggestion of the surrealism at play in the Goan artistic worldview does echo Adjanaia's observations, but describes and categorizes them even further, running the risk of compartmentalizing all Goan art as surreal. It is imperative to also discern the surreal from the magically real, for the former borrows from dreams and the latter builds the magical within an overall context of realistic narration. While Menezes' intention seems to simply propose a revision of sight toward Goan art that has not necessarily aligned with the Indian modernist narrative and has been unduly penalized for it, either by way of exclusion or dismissal, the title places the viewer in direct conversation with the curator and the artists exclaiming the activation of a fresh vision. This statement too, runs the risk of fermenting the already brewing insider/outsider problem.

The Goan Art Forum was an artists' collective formed of artists from Goa in January 1991, to express their initial boycott of the 17th State Art Exhibition of the Kala Academy and demand immediate implementation of their proposals to create a separate wing for visual art, a permanent art gallery, graphic and painting studio facilities and a directory of Goan artists. Their memorandum reflected the will to revitalize art

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production in Goa and read:

... a cultural void has pervaded Goa, specially in the field of visual art demanding urgent recourse and attention to fill the same. This depressive situation has been chiefly affected by the already instituted Kala Academy, which on foundation stone revered a promise of lofty goals but have failed constantly in realising its said objectives ... The Goan Art Forum founded by the alumni of Goa College of Art, in reaction to the intermittent activities and to the recent arbitrary exhibition, 'The Artists from Goa' are protesting with an initial boycott of the seventeenth State Art Exhibition 1991, as the functioning of the Kala Academy inhibits our memory, steers our sensibilities and insults our creativity.⁸

Besides better institutional facilities, the forum also demanded monographs on artists of international repute- V.S Gaitonde, António Xavier Trindade, Angelo Fonseca and Waman Bhonsle. Menezes' regret on the lack of documentation on these pioneering artists' echoes in my head as I speak to the Secretary of the Goan Art Forum, artist and teacher, Theodore Mesquita. Mesquita speaks of a Goa lost to memories. Goa, to him is a state of mind for the region, he says, has lost both its land and its people.

My meeting with Mesquita illuminates a deeper understanding of the insulated growth of art practices in Goa. He is happy to share catalogues and books, besides colouring for me a vivid

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picture of the relative isolation of Goans from the rest of the Indian polity; averse effects of development and tourism, and the dire desire for change leading many to migrate abroad. Residing in a heritage home in the heart of Panjim, he tells me that his is one of the few that still exists today. Inheritance disputes and overwhelming attractive offers to buy have contributed to the phasing out, as it were, of older heritage buildings belonging to the colonial Goan architectural style. He goes on to speak of how Goans didn't want to be part of either Portugal or India, reflected in the Opinion Poll of 1967. He also shares anecdotes from the art world, and how only a handful of patrons and writers have bothered to patronize or include Goan artists in their collections and work respectively. The Goan Art Forum put up fourteen shows between 1991-99; their first exhibition titled the *Backyard Ritual* referenced Goan artists practicing in what was claimed to be similar to a vacuum- a sacred but remote corner, largely secluded from the rest of society. In an attempt to bridge this gap between the art community and society, the exhibition was conceived in a dark chamber; the public invited in as a candle lit procession, accompanied by music of traditional Goan instruments. Each candle carried by an individual was placed on an age old stone as a rite of invoking the 'spirit' of art. This was concluded as a symbolic gesture by ripping off the covers from the exhibits in the hall pervaded by a fog, ultra-violet lights and chanting.⁹ Learning of the exhibition, I am struck by the exhibition's theatricality and gestural play. For the early 1990s this was indeed an elaborate and uncommon way to view art, especially in India. Not only did it make the experience of viewing

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personal and participatory but it also activated a subliminal experience between the painting and the viewer. According to the author of *Vocal Tracks: Performance and Sound Media*, 2008, Jacob Smith, the voice ‘can function as an index of the body, a conveyor of language, a social bond, a musical instrument of sublime flexibility, a gauge of emotion, a central component of the art of acting, and a register of everyday identity’.¹⁰ Could the employment of sound and chants introduced within the format of the exhibition, extracted from a specific frame of time but placed anew without the bearings of historiography, be understood as a return to primordial realities that review contemporary living? Could it be an attempt at excavating a more holistic, perhaps even spiritual identity? It is these early and ongoing developments in Goa that foreground our understanding of the exhibition at SAF.

Vivek Menezes’ involvement in art began in the 1990s when he was a young journalist charting out his career in France and then in New York. Belonging to a literary family that patronized the arts, Menezes had access to feed his curiosity of Indian art. Following visits to galleries and a series of interactions with artists, gallerists, and patrons revealed what appeared to him as a rejection or marginalization from both mainstream discourse and the market, of iconic painters from Goa like V. S. Gaitonde, Francis Newton Souza, Angelo Fonseca, and Vamona Navelkar. Menezes claims Souza as a significant influence on his own work but, besides the brilliant

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artist, he also saw in Souza a troubled man, one who had successfully internalized his identity but was alienated and sidelined by peers and patrons. Menezes grappled with this identity conundrum for many years before returning to Goa and actively writing on the cultural landscape of the region. For Menezes, the exhibition is personal. On one of the curatorial walk-throughs that he held on each evening of the festival, he spoke of the exhibition as resembling a family gathering, comprising of artists like family members of all ages and personalities. And so, he devised an inclusive way of selecting work for the exhibition. He invited all, and placed an open call for submissions, eventually accommodating artwork across three generations of Goan artists, all produced within the last five years and presented in a historic hundred-year-old building in Panjim—the Bento Miguel House. Originally designed to house shops on the ground floor with residential apartments on the floors above, the structure was recently restored by German architect Robert Patzschke, whose firm's work is characterized by a classical-traditional architectural language. They promote and support an architectural style that contributes to the enhancement and beautification of the living environment beyond its basic function. The sensibility behind their restoration design reflects a respect for preserving the value of previous eras and finding the right measure of its application for the present, in a manner that awakens memories of the traditional building through vivid, nuanced and consciously-crafted details, that can be contrasted with modern, minimalist grid architecture.¹¹ The design of the building guided Menezes' exhibition design

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insofar that works were placed in response to the world outside—the neighbourhood, the city, and the landscape. The Bento Miguel House lent itself to think of the works' display intelligently with windows and stairs being used as spaces for works that desired a response from, or dialogue with the outer world. Displayed along the staircase for instance is *Eyewitnesses to History*, 2017, a series of photographs by Kalidas Mhamal that chronologically date the city's colonial architecture and probes the role of buildings as witnesses to history. As viewers ascend the stairs, they also move in time; the 35 images described by Mhamal as a visual diary of Goa's past, where buildings constructed before 1961 carried the date of their making in a painted tile inserted in the facade of the house. Similarly, Nirupa Naik's *Mandovi*, 2017, inspired by the landscape of the coastal state—its rivers, abundance of green and hilly patches sketched in between—is positioned on the landing of the staircase, with a large open window inviting Naik's rendition of the River Goddess to interact with the green foliage it overlooks.

There is a multiplicity of voices and contextual directions at play within the exhibition. Visible through the glass doors of the ground floor space is Viraj Naik's painting depicting the discovery of the riverine state by the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama titled *Govern-Or General*, 2015. A naked, dark-skinned Goan is seen standing under the outstretched arm of the robed, broad-shouldered figure of da Gama, illustrating in one image the disposition of the colonizer towards the colonized. Recording the critical historical event as the first engagement with the exhibition, the large painting leads on

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to a series of drawings by Loretta Joyce Pinto, an outspoken activist commenting on the rampant social and ecological abuse in the wake of development in Goa that began in the mid-1970s, particularly caused by mining and industrial pollutants. The loss of agrarian land and a harmonious rural lifestyle led many people out of their villages, choosing to migrate abroad. Her drawings are a montage of circumstances that the Goan finds himself in today—opting for Portuguese citizenship that is offered to the former colony up to three generations, or the loss of land to development or other migrants. And with this, the crisis of Goan identity is further compounded. It is these two moments that Menezes chooses as an introduction to the exhibition, moments that map Goa's multicultural reality from its past to its present. History is also revisited in the work of Pradeep Naik, whose sculptural objects are spatial iterations of a bygone time, that now find themselves in a new context, exploring as it were, the essence of being antique. A section of wall plaster with traces of traditional Kaavi mural art (specific to the Konkan belt), painted on the top half instead of the bottom, finds a place in the corner of the room next to Naik's other two sculptural pieces made of fiberglass but appearing to be weathered wood.

Then there are works that reflect the folkloric imagination, suggestive of Hobsbawm and Ranger's idealized peoplehood. Hybrid, disproportionate, and bizarre creatures invite us down the rabbit hole, the next level of the show unfolding like a pageant of fantastical beings in naturescapes or delving into explorations of the cosmos, creating parallel worlds that interrogate the artists' Goan identity. The rise of humanist

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thinking and the shift from rural to urban living in the post Enlightenment era affected the manner in which humans saw themselves vis-à-vis animals. Animals have been present in visual art through different historical periods, but their constant presence is now seen as inversely proportional to their closeness to humans. The proliferation of animals and the personification of nature in contemporary visual art today is another kind of viewing the 'other', not in opposition, but rather as shaped by the other. Ryan Abreu's etchings are allegorical narrations where the characters are plotted in the theatre of dark comedy. Santosh Morajkar's brightly painted animal sculptures probe non-human alterity in the urbanised and globalised societies of today. Karisma D'Souza's paintings attempt to hold the fleeting moment in wistful memories and observations that are steered by history and poetry. Ramdas Gadekar's paintings are explorations of mental and physical spaces conveyed through built environments, either windows or walls, both of which function as mediatic screens between the inside and the outside, the self and the other.

On another level, Bhisaji Gadekar's *Body/ Space/ Clay*, 2017 explores the physicality of the body through the tactile material of clay. The intuitive process of modelling or plastering of clay naturally involves the impressions of the maker's hand and body. For his durational performance, Gadekar fleshes out the transference of energy from self to material and space in his investigations on body language. A graduate of Shanti Niketan, where he studied under Sanchayan Ghosh, Gadekar brings a fresh perspective to the discourse on Goan identity, one that looks at the universal man vis-a vis

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space and time. Ghosh's influence on his student is discernible in the way performative action bridges and condenses the distance between the viewer and the doer, the insider and the outsider. The viewer is invited to participate, not through words but through an intuitive bond that simulates the bonds that build cultural networks and collectives. Gadekar's work is spontaneous and surprisingly infectious, so much so that a fellow artist joins him midway, writing verses of freedom and peace in clay along the walls. The performance ends after 48 hours with the lighting of candles around the clay plastered room, as both an offering and a celebration, Gadekar informs. The residue, temporarily memorialising the experience, is what remains till the end of the exhibition.

Gadekar shares space with two of Goa's most brilliant and revered painters in Laxman Pai and Vamona Navelcar, both born in Portuguese Goa, and whose artistic language addresses the conceptual bearings of man, nature, and spirit. Of Pai's paintings on Purush and Prakriti, Richard Bartholomew wrote in 1966,

Pai has illustrated the concept of the negative and the positive, of the yoni and the lingam, the intuitive and the intellectual, etc. being complementary to each other. Fish, flesh, and fowl features in his work; fish shaped eyes with the light of realisation radiating through the pupils like shaft, the physical union of the male and the female which results in creation at its highest sublimity; and the Bird of Time or of Beauty that will not stay.¹²

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The prolific painter, now in his '90s, was an active member of the Progressive Artist's Movement whilst a student at the J.J School of Art in Mumbai. He spent ten years in Paris, served as Principle of the Goa College of Art from 1977- 1988, and then shuttled between USA and Goa after the demise of his wife, to be brought back to Goa by art patron and friend Shaista Thapar with whom he now resides.

On display is a large canvas titled *Dancing Waves*, 2017 that vividly explores the Goan landscape through a reinvented folk vocabulary, painted in Pai's signature *decorative* style.¹³ It is a lyrical and romantic vision, but with a resolve to conform only to the mind's eye and the inner workings of its maker's fancy. Vamona Navelcar's two paintings, *The Last Supper*, 2011, and *The Pieta*, 2014, address Christian themes in a strangely secular way. Having lived in Goa, Portugal, and Mozambique, Navelcar fashioned a style that reflected the diasporic cultural geographies he'd experienced. A retrospective of his work at the Fundação Oriente, Panjim—which ran parallel to Serendipity Arts Festival 2017—curated by the US-based academic, R. Benedito Ferrao along with other members of the Al-Zulajj Collective, traced what Menezes calls a singularly Goan trajectory from the villages of Portuguese Goa to Mozambique, and back to what is now the smallest state in the Indian republic.¹⁴

In tandem with India's move to the far right, Goa's support of cultural production reveals its religio-nationalist biases, and is to the exclusion of an artist like Navelcar whose art incorporates Christian and

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African themes among others. That such remarkable talent and hard work like Navelcar's goes unrecognized speaks to the lack of imagination of the State and the ways in which it seeks to limit how Goa itself can be imagined through the art of its visionaries.

The sentiment expressed above by Vishvesh Kandolkar, Associate Professor at Goa College of Architecture, on Navelcar's work resonates with me as I observe the artist's rendition of the *Pieta*, a darkly painted composition of the Mother Mary cradling the body of Christ as they rise through the clouds upward to heaven, a white dove symbolizing the Holy Spirit and a pair of sheep symbolizing the Good Shepherd. In the top right corner, floating in a cube is the Hindu god of death, Yama, seated on his bull with a mace in hand. The composition reads as a note on salvation, and the insertion of Yama into the Christian-themed work reflects the internalization of the tenets of both religions, which are reinvented into a deeply spiritual vision that transcends the limitations of religion.

The exhibition is organized not by date or artist, but as an anthology of narratives that emerge from the Goan reality. It encompasses the region's complex history, the values and faith of its people and their vision for the future. Goa is also called *Aparanta*, a term coined by the Mauryans to reference the Western limits of the 2nd century Mauryan Empire, and as per this definition is understood as a region that lies on the horizon. Ancient and medieval literature identifies *Aparanta* as an umbrella term for the Konkan belt.¹⁵ The horizon marks the

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finitude of human experience, a line that questions our being in time and space. It assumes the perceiver dwelling within its bounds instead of apart or beyond, lending to a plethora of individual experiences that are motivated and limited by the perceiver's emotional and mental disposition. Beyond Ranjit Hoskote's 2007 exhibition titled *Aparanta*, the word itself encompasses the region's past and multifaceted concepts of identity. Facing the horizon, my experience is different from another's, and different is also that of one Goan from the other. Menezes' exhibition stimulates a similar response. The quotes on the wall inform our vision and guide us to see the Goan reality through the eyes of an insider. *Now I See It! The Invisible River of Konkani Surrealism* unfolds before the viewer, emerging from the horizon, and as scholar Didier Maleuvre¹⁶ puts it, teasing the thirst for resolution but never satisfying it.

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Notes

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Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig.3



Fig.4







Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

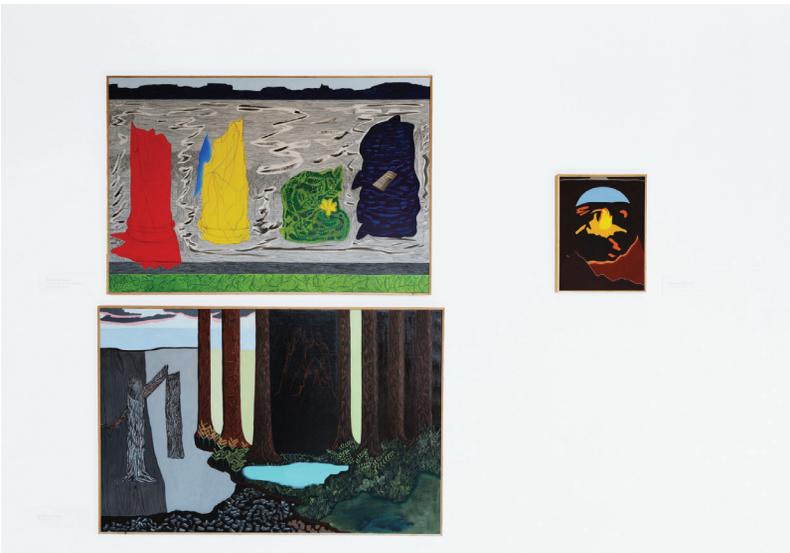


Fig. 9







Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig.13



Fig.14

PROJECTS / PROCESSES

Captions

Page 42

Viraj Naik, *Govern-Or General*, Oil on canvas, 2005

Fig 1

Installation view

Fig 2

Pradeep Naik, *Reminiscence*, Painted fiberglass, 2017

Fig 3

Nirupa Naik, *Mandovi*, Acrylic on canvas, 2017

Fig 4

Installation view: (foreground) Rohit Bhosle, *Mand-I*, Charcoal on paper, 2017, *Mand-II*, Tea wash and charcoal on paper 2017, (background) *Untitled*, Shailesh Dhabolkar *Disappearing Traces*, Single Channel Video Projection, 2017

Fig 5

Installation view: (facing wall- left) Yolanda de Sousa Kammermeier, *De.Fleshed*, Acrylic on canvas, 2017 (facing wall-right) Sandesh Sonu Naik, *Gaur-nica*, Acrylic on canvas, 2017 (right) Siddarth Gosavi, *Hippy Song*, Acrylic on canvas, 2016 (on floor) Santosh Morajkar, *Untitled*, Acrylic and pencil on fiberglass, 2013

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Fig 6

Ramdas Gadekar, (left) *Growing Walls*, Acrylic on canvas, 2016
(right) *Growing Urban*, Acrylic on canvas, 2017

Fig 7

Sonia Rodrigues Sabharwal, (left) *Golden Era*, Mixed medium on canvas, 2017 (right) *Coal Era*, Mixed medium on canvas, 2017

Fig 8

Rajesh Chodankar (left) *Divine Force*, Acrylic on canvas, 2017
(right) *Myth I, II, III, IV*, Mixed medium on canson paper, 2017

Fig 9

Karishma D'Souza (top) *The Nationalist, The Patriot, Plant Person, Water and New Things*, Oil on canvas, 2017 (bottom) *The Republic- 3*, Oil on canvas, 2017 (right) *Portrait of a friend*, Oil on canvas, 2017

Fig 10

Bhisaji Gadekar, *Body/Space/Clay*, Three day performance, 16,17,18 December 2017

Fig 11

Dhondu Krishna Kedar, *Weapons of Faith Installation*, Multimedia Installation, Pasted Cloth on Wood, Digital Prints on Satin and Woolen Cloth, 2014

PROJECTS / PROCESSES

Fig 12

Laxman Pai, *Dancing Waves*, Acrylic on canvas, 2017, Loaned from the collection of Shaista Thapar

Fig 13

Vamona Navelcar, *The Pieta*, Acrylic on canvas, 2014, *The Last Supper*, Acrylic on canvas, 2011, Loaned from the collection of Shaista Thapar

Fig 14

Installation view

Biographies

Kanika Anand is a Delhi based art writer and curator. She holds a Master's degree in History of Art from the National Museum Institute, India and has been curatorial fellow at the Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, 2012-13. She has worked extensively with galleries and alternative spaces such as Exit Art and the Gagosian Gallery in the United States, the Centre National d'Art Contemporain in France and with Exhibit 320 and Gallery Espace in India. She is the Founder of Parked-At, a roving exhibition platform, presenting alternative modes of viewing, engagement and participation and is the Exhibition Coordinator for the first edition of the Indian Ceramics Triennale, *Breaking Ground*: Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur, 2018.

Vivek Menezes is a widely published writer, photographer, critic, and co-founder and curator of the annual Goa Arts + Literature Festival. He is a frequent contributor to leading publications in India and abroad, as well as a weekly columnist for the *Times of India*. He was born in Bombay, went to high school in New York, and holds degrees from Wesleyan University and the London School of Economics. His debut book of non-fiction will be published in 2018 by Penguin Random House. Vivek lives in his ancestral Goa along with his wife and three sons, very close to where the Mandovi River opens up to meet the Arabian Sea.

Projects / Processes: Volume IV

Mixed, Fused, and Rehashed

Cultural Hybridity Through Ethnic Dress

by Kanika Anand

Is my horizon different from yours?

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Project Head: Kanika Anand

Editors: Nandita Jaishankar & Arnav Adhikari

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