

international seminar
DakshinaChitra

28, 29, 30 January 2011 | exhibition until 28-02



URBAN VISUALITIES

SITES AND SIGHTS
OF STREET ART

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with support from the
MINISTRY OF CULTURE

and ICCR
Indian Council for Cultural Relations

- limited seats - please register -
including lunch: Rs. 350,- per day
without lunch: Rs. 90,- per day (adults)
Rs. 30,- (students)
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Urban Visualities: Sites and Sights of Street Art

International seminar, artist workshop and exhibition

Urban Visualities is a series of events consisting of an artist workshop, international seminar, and exhibition on art and spectacle in public places in India and beyond. It explores image circulations in and contestations of the public realm. The types of visualities addressed here range from cinema imagery, religious hoardings, advertizing images to political statues and murals.

Artist workshop

Prior to the seminar an artist workshop will be held from January 24-27, in which artists from various backgrounds from India and beyond will produce several works together. The results of the artist workshop will be exhibited in an exhibition dedicated to the theme. The exhibition will be opened at the start of the seminar.

Everyone is welcome to join and contribute during the workshop. Please send us an email roosgerritsen@yahoo.com or mcfindia@gmail.com, or call 9841011785 / 9176476322

Exhibition

The exhibition displays the work of Sundeep Bali, David Blamey, Ranjan De, Murugan, Ramachandran, Ravikanth & Prabath Kumar (Raqs Media Collective), Vishal Rawlley, Yousuf Saeed, Joyston Vaz, and photos by Shirley Abraham & Amit Madheshiya, Roos Gerritsen, Kiran Keswani, Joanna Kirkpatrick, and Kathryn Myers.

The opening reception of the exhibition will be on January 28 18:00 pm at DakshinaChitra.

Seminar

The 3-day seminar will be an interdisciplinary and international platform that brings together (art) historians, anthropologists, artists, and curators who collectively address these issues of visuality and urbanity.

For the seminar, please register (Rs. 350/day, including lunch. Without lunch: Rs. 90/day or Rs. 30/day for students)

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Address DakshinaChitra
East Coast Road
Muttukadu
Chingleput District

Urban Visualities: Sites and Sights of Street Art

International seminar, artist workshop, and exhibition

ARTIST WORKSHOP

January 24-27 AT DAKSHINACHITRA

SEMINAR

DAY 1: JANUARY 28

9:30 - 10:15 REGISTRATION & COFFEE

10:15 - 10:30 INAUGURATION

10:30 - 13:00 panel SITES & SIGHTS OF THE CITY
Moderator: Shivaji Panikkar

- 1) Roos Gerritsen
Vignettes of the city: Urban Visualities and the access to urban space
- 2) Vishal Rawlley
Street Toys and Popular Media
- 3) Kiran Keswani
Territoriality in the Indian Bazaar
- 4) David Blamey
Urban Visions of India: Notes to Self

13:00 - 14:30 LUNCH

14:30 - 17:30 panel VISUAL GEOGRAPHIES
Moderator: Sadanand Menon

- 1) Baishali Ghosh
Visuals as Links in-Between Lords, Lands and Religious Architecture
- 2) Yousuf Saeed
Visual pastiche as symbol of religious pluralism in south Asian Muslim popular media
- 3) Shirley Abraham & Amit Madheshiya
Tiled gods appear on Mumbai's streets: Negotiating through strictly delineated spaces of the megacity, exploring their transformation into curious zones of urban propriety
- 4) Patricia Spyer
From Visible to Invisible Backdrop and Beyond: Muslim and Christian Sidewalk Art and Photographic Studios in Postwar Maluku, Indonesia

17:30 – 18:00 BREAK

18:00 OPENING EXHIBITION

18:30 GHANA PERFORMANCE

19:30 DINNER AT DAKSHINACHITRA

DAY 2: JANUARY 29

9:30 – 10:00 ARRIVAL & COFFEE

10:00 – 12:30 panel REFRAMING THE VERNACULAR

Moderator: Sadanand Menon

- 1) Ranjan De
Political and Religious Graffiti on the Chennai City walls
- 2) Minna Valjakka
From scenic sights to streets and art galleries - the impact of site on graffiti in China
- 3) Swapna Sathish
The Sacred and the Profane: Authenticity and Hybridity in Contemporary Temple Painting
- 4) Partha Mitter
Popular Prints and the Rise of Indian Nationalism

12:30 – 13:30 LUNCH

13:30 - 16:00 panel SPECTACLE AND APPEAL

Moderator: Shivaji Panikkar

- 1) Philip Lutgendorf
Chai Why? Toward a Social History of the (North) Indian “National Drink”
- 2) N. Ramachandran
Light Hoardings of Tamil Nadu
- 3) Margaret Thomas
(Im)Possible: Possibilities of Digitally Enhanced Imagery in Tamil Cinema Advertising
- 4) Kathryn Myers
Re-visiting/visualizing home, the work of Sundeep Bali, Rajesh Sagara, Ebenezer Sunder Singh
- 5) Neeta Omprakash
Street as Exhibition Space: Transformation of Space – from Mundane to Sacred & Festive Presentation

16:00 – 19:00 EXCURSION CHENNAI

20:00 DINNER AT CHOLAMANDAL

DAY 3: JANUARY 30

9:30 – 10:00 ARRIVAL & COFFEE

10:00 - 12:30 Panel MONUMENTALITY AND THE MUSEUM

Moderator: Shivaji Panikkar & Sadanand Menon

- 1) Jayashree Venkatadurai
Placing Kannagi on the Beach Road: An Inquiry about Iconic Valences
- 2) Martijn de Rooij
What makes it to the museum? Processes of museological valorization in India
- 3) Santhosh Sakhinala
Regional Nationalism and the urban context – icons, representation and politics
- 4) A. Srivathsan
Statues and the Politics of Urban Space in Chennai

12:30-13:00 SUMMING UP: *art on streets* by Stephen Inglis

13:00 - 14:00 LUNCH

14:00 – 16:00 SCREENING OF

Jannat ki Rail (The Train to Heaven) (7min.) by Yousuf Saeed
video using religious posters and a popular qawwali song.

DesKilling of Art (30 min.) by Gita Hudson

Banner art has been around for a long time. The makers of banners were skilled craftspeople. Some were truly inspirational artists. But the production of the banners seen in our towns and cities today has been transformed by new technologies and materials. Skills with paint and brush have been subsumed within the mass-produced output of the computer graphics industry. The former and the artists of yesterday are left in history's wake.

16:00 VISIT TO MAHABALIPURAM & DINNER

Abstracts

Shirley Abraham and Amit Madheshiya

Tiled gods appear on Mumbai's streets: Negotiating through strictly delineated spaces of the megacity, exploring their transformation into curious zones of urban propriety

The presentation will focus on the distinct metamorphosis of publicly accessible spaces in the cityscape of Mumbai by the appearance of panels of images of gods plastered on ceramic tiles; placed to dissuade people from defiling public spaces. Found in strikingly incongruous domains near garbage bins, street corners and public walls - spaces prone to defilement, these tiled gods derived from stylistic conventions of popular calendar art are arranged as a linear display of white square tiles as a unique syncretic medium. A notably distinct site, such street visual galleries exhibit deities representing all faiths, juxtaposed in harmonious cohabitation.

Looking at this practice as an ingenious method of streetscape management, this presentation examines the demarcated geographies of a city and their reversal catalysed by the tiles gods. Also traversing through the performative of the tiled gods, it explores the phenomenon of their appearance on the streets of Mumbai as they become vectors for mapping the anxieties of a megacity. The presentation also attempts to chart the movement of these visual injunctions transcending the unseen delineations of the supposedly pure and profane, sanctifying an everyday public space being guarded by an army of deities.

David Blamey

Urban Visions of India: Notes to Self

This text takes the form of a collection of interconnecting vignettes – each an observation of a particular street scene scenario – that imaginatively unravels the mythology of Indian cultural identities in a global context. Sources referred to include: the films *John & Jane* by Ashim Ahluwalia and *Pratidwandi* by Satyajit Ray; *Hari Krishna devotees in London*; *Osho's ashram in Pune*; *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand; the economics of begging; and everyday occurrences on Indian streets. In both structure and sentiment the point of view adopted echoes Baudelaire's idea that the flâneur is uniquely positioned to understand the city as a wandering participant observer, but expands this concept to the present era of budget airlines and the worldwide web.

Ranjan De

Political and Religious Graffiti on the Chennai City walls

Chennai city has some of the most colourful and graphic political portraits and slogans in the local language Tamizh. It also abounds in some amazing religious iconography, as a backlash to the Babri Masjid demolition and the subsequent rise of Right-wing Hinduism. These are depicted in panels across the city that depicted three main religions in harmony with each other - Islam, Christianity and Hinduism. Some panels display the entire gamut of religious practices and beliefs along a wall. The treatment of the language is also very graphical and at times emblazoned across many walls, across a kilometer or two. The treatment and the palette used differ from wall panel to wall panel, leading to some fascinating artwork. The treatment used by the graffiti artists are heavily borrowed from the thriving cinema industry. Quite a few of the graffiti artists are out-of-work Cinema hoarding

painters, pushed to the margins due to Flex Digital printing. And as the medium used is either coloured distemper or powder paints the treatment is either highly tonal as the Cinema hoardings of yore, bordering on photo-realism to cut colour graphic imagery. The pictorial iconography of the political portraits could be categorised in Photo Realism, Graphic Treatment and Calendar Art.

The talk will explore the medium and imagery of the Political Portraiture, The graphical treatment of the Tamil calligraphy, and the treatments of the Religious imagery across the walls of our city. My interest in the same, harks back to the mid eighties when I began documenting the popular street art of Madras city - primarily Hand-crafted Cinema hoardings and the amazing sticker art all over the auto-rickshaw coachwork. This interest has continued and expanded into Political Wall graffiti and religious iconography over the past year. My talk would then be about my recent interest in this amazing platform that emblazons our city walls and how we must celebrate the same and condone the Govt. sponsored wall paintings on themes related to Tamilnadu. The talk will be celebrating the works of Chennai graffiti artists.

Roos Gerritsen

Vignettes of the city: Urban Visualities and the access to urban space

In my presentation I will shortly introduce the seminar by highlighting several of the themes that will come up in the presentations of the speakers. I will use my research on Tamil film fan clubs as vignettes with which I explore issues on urban space, audiences, politics, spectacle and e/affect. In particular I want to address the image production of and consumption by fan clubs. Both individual fans and local fan clubs make elaborate use of images in urban space as well as in the more intimate spaces of the everyday. The repetition and often spectacular size of banners and posters produced by fans create an intimate relation between the image and beholder. At the same time, it creates visibility for fans who often come from lower socio-economic backgrounds. These images question dichotomies of public and private as well as show how grassroots productions such as by fans create these everyday spaces. The image world of fan clubs brings me to other vernacular image practices in Tamil Nadu's urban spaces and recent attempts to restrain and replace them with images of 'beauty' and 'culture'. The changes in this visual repertoire raises questions on the allure of the visual environment, the city and the everyday engagements and memories that people attach to it.

Baishali Ghosh

Visuals as Links in-Between Lords, Lands and Religious Architecture

The paper probes the images on religious architecture of Burdwan town and inhabitants' discourse of law and land use in post colonial West Bengal. The religious structures of the town bear witness to the power that controls it including the 'Burdwan Raj', political parties and a vocal and alert local community. These powers take recourse the legacy of "Bengal terracotta" and determine the style of the religious structure. The visuals on these religious structures are displayed in the different spaces of the architecture and sites of the town. The paper argues that various myth of 'Burdwan raj's trial' in early 19th century continues to prevail in the mind of local that in turn drives the users of the religious architecture to 'prove' the legal possession of the land that they use. As a result number of disjointed visuals appears as testimonials of the land of the religious architecture. These visuals are posters, calendars, banners, terracotta plaques etc. The paper also investigates how the

visual languages are constructed to claim the authenticity of the authority of the religious architecture.

Kiran Keswani

Territoriality in the Indian Bazaar

In Indian cities, the Bazaar or shopping area often originates with a Market building or a Street bazaar and expands into many intersecting streets of shops and vending zones. A Public space such as a footpath is sometimes territorialized by vendors selling fruits, vegetable, flowers and household goods. There is no EDGE differentiating spaces and functions, no distinction between where the street vendor belongs, where the pedestrian walks and where the vehicles move. This paper explores the territoriality within the Street bazaars, drawing upon Mattias Kärrholm's paper Territorial Complexity in Public Places. It looks at how Street vendors mark, defend and personalise their territories and the ways in which they visually and spatially influence Urban spaces.

Philip Lutgendorf

Chai Why? Toward a Social History of the (North) Indian "National Drink"

This presentation offers a report on my ongoing research into the promotion and popularization of tea-drinking in 20th century India. It is inspired in part by recent ethno-historical work on everyday culinary commodities, by anthropological interest in the "social life of things," and by my own recognition of the remarkable role that tea, modified to Indian taste, has come to play in diet, social intercourse, and public culture in a relatively short span of time. My research focuses on the mass popularization of indigenized "chai" through changes in manufacturing, marketing, and consumption, and in eating habits, urban space, and social networks, and involves both archival and field research. In my talk for the "Urban Visualities" seminar, I will emphasize the role played by advertising images in transmitting the "tea habit" to Indians, particularly in the post-Independence era.

Partha Mitter

Popular Prints and the Rise of Indian Nationalism

The paper will deal with the contribution of a popular art form, namely mass prints, in the creation modern national identity during the colonial era. It will also comment on the tensions between fine and applied arts during this period, a tension that still exists. In pre-colonial India, the decorative arts were not viewed as inferior to painting and sculpture. The decorative arts and artisans however lost their position in colonial society with the rise of academic art and the creation of elite 'gentlemen artists'. The arrival of mechanical reproduction in its turn challenged the status enjoyed by the elite artists, who were prepared to compete with the artisans for the lucrative market in mass prints. The printmakers were able to create a market for cheap religious prints, thereby contributing to the rise of a visual culture that fed into the burgeoning nationalism at the end of the 19th century. As a form of mass communication, these prints affected the elite no less than the ordinary people, cutting across classes, communities and regions.

Kathryn Myers

Re-visiting/visualizing home, the work of Sundeep Bali, Rajesh Sagara, Ebenezer Sunder Singh

This paper presents the work of three artists, Sundeep Bali, Rajesh Sagara and Ebenezer Sunder Singh who use site specific and performance methods of art-making to examine and reflect upon their relationship to their place of origin. In Delhi Drama” Sundeep Bali scripts and photographs “performative interventions” in order to enliven various sites and monuments of his native “old and new” Delhi.

In “Minding the Gap” Rajesh Sagara locates pieces of sculpture in specific sites of importance in the old city of Ahmedabad where generations of his family come from. As a result he came to know some of the older neighborhoods, the “pols” of Ahmedabad in more intimate ways than he had before.

In “Arjuna Thapasu” Ebenezer Singh revisits the city of his birth to enact the role of Arjuna in a Tamil “Therukoothu” or street drama which he describes as a redemptive experience. All three artists use their artistic investigations to both examine the historic origins as well as rapidly changing nature of these sites of family origin and connection.

Neeta Omprakash

Street as Exhibition Space: Transformation of Space – from Mundane to Sacred & Festive

The street is a space where things are in constant flux. The street space does not belong to any body at the same time to everybody. Anybody has an access in to this space either to use it by being part of it or can be a distant spectator and enjoy the mundane reality. This mundane space gets transformed on the festive occasion automatically due to a long time unstated memorandum of understanding among the city dwellers. On the festive occasion the street space undergoes a transformation in terms of the purpose it serves otherwise.

Goa has few unique festivals which are celebrated collectively by the entire society. On the occasion of Carnival, Bonderam, Shigmo and Narakchaturthi every town gets to see the folk art being presented to them on the main street of the town. The procession comprises of folk dance, folk music and the floats made by the young talents from every town. The main characteristic feature of the street space is retained with a change in the purpose it serves. The folk artists proceed from one place to the other as they present their dance and music. The space is still used for the purpose of transportation but for the dancers, musicians and floats. The space transforms from ‘the mundane to the festive and the sacred’.

N. Ramachandran and V. Anamika

Light Hoardings of Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu has always been wealthy in its visual culture, especially the geography of south India is so distinct and intense that, nature is experienced lavishly through its color. Though we have many diversities like tradition, climate, culture, caste system etc.... as an artist we have seen a undercurrent which runs through everyone’s mindscape, were all the people’s minds converge- “it is the visual experience they look forward for”, whether it’s their dress, or kollywood cinema, or religious festivals, or the welcoming of a celebrity, or anything starting from a child’s birth to a

person's funeral.... There is an interesting way of displaying their experience in public. We feel that this commonness is because of the rich geographical condition of our region.

There are also many visual expressions, like wall paintings, banners, hoardings, posters, bit notices, street decorations, etc... they all change with time and surroundings excluding and including many things. Among these visual expressions 'Light Hoardings' have established themselves as an icon.

People of this region celebrate and revere every aspect of life/nature to its ultimate. Among many celebrations the most noteworthy are the light festival "karthigai", and "deepavali", where the whole concept of the celebration is about the "life energy" the light. In earlier days the festival was lit with thousands of oil lamps, and when times changed and electricity was invented.

These festivals started engulfing the modern technologies, and started to epitomize the gods and goddesses with more astonishing visuals by using the "serial bulbs" constructed entirely out of tiny electric bulbs tied to the framework of the images of the gods, goddesses and celebrities, which are constructed with thin bamboo strips. Each part of the image is constructed with different colors accordingly. Then the final connecting to the circuit board is done meticulously. The hoardings are done in such a way that the colors keep changing every now and then. The dynamism of the subjects is exaggerated by the size and scale. These huge light hoardings of gods, goddesses and celebrities take over the event.

Almost all the religious sects and also the political parties laying up their leaders' images in light follow these kinds of light hoardings. These light hoardings are intended for the nighttime, when the people come out to relax when the heat is less.

Nowadays they had also included story telling with audio and movement, it is quite interesting to watch the narration of the story of ganesha or murugan... , sometimes it is quiet distracting for the commuters, but it is also very attractive.

Vishal Rawlley

Street Toys and Popular Media

Now even street toys have become feature rich. Local handicraft and simple mechanics has given way to imported Chinese varieties with flashing lights, audio chips and sensors, and batteries are included too. And these plastic toys still cost the same as clay or wooden toys. These 'light and sound' cinema-toys and sound-toys mimic our hyper-mediated existence and reference the world of entertainment-media and popular-culture. Industrial production, global trade, regional customization, informal retail and local consumption are all contained in a simple street toy. This presentation shall look at some examples of these toys and the stories they tell us.

Martijn de Rooij

What makes it to the museum? Processes of museological valorization in India

Some objects or images are framed within museum spaces where they easily obtain admiration and contemplation, while others struggle for visibility on the streets. What is the difference between these visual infrastructures and how do they connect? The process of museological valorization entails first of all a spatial framing that divides the sacred and the secular, the old and the new, or the other and the same, generally represented by museums of art, antiquity, and ethnography. By isolating objects from the everyday, eradicating the smells, sounds and tactile encounters of the urban public space, and introducing an element of visiting time, they are rescued from a fleeting existence, and invite ways of seeing that contrast with visualites outside the museum walls.

Exploring the often taken for granted museological practices of selection, protection, circulation, and display will expose museums as driving forces in the production, rather than representation, of history, art, or the other. Instead of interpreting India's museum enterprise as a belated realization of modernity such an approach will shed light on the particularity of the projects of modernity, in India, Europe, and elsewhere. Taking 'street art' in Indian urban areas into account, which involves questions regarding the (refusal of) museumization of street art or the museumization of the street itself, will point towards the museum as a differentiating device that encourages certain ways of seeing within particular contexts leading to particular outcomes.

Yousuf Saeed

Visual pastiche as symbol of religious pluralism in south Asian Muslim popular media

Contrary to the prevalent perception of Islamic devotional media as primarily depicting the images of Mecca and Medina shrines, Muslim posters and videos feature a wide range of localised iconography and idioms including some which may not necessarily have origins in Islam or Islamic cultures. True to the aesthetics and techniques of India's bazaar art of calendars and posters, the visual components used in the 20th century Muslim poster art comprise of a lot of borrowing from the images of other religions especially Hinduism. Moreover, in order to produce inexpensive posters, the industry also utilises a lot of cost-cutting measures including recycling the older visual materials and of course plagiarism of the existing images. While some "artists" are careful not to reveal the element of recycling, others also do a rather crude job of cut and paste to produce "new" images. These pastiches feature not only in the printed posters but also in audio and video discourses available in the devotional market. Does this "recycling" only reflect a mode of cost-cutting by the publisher? Or can one read a deeper process of syncretising of different faiths in the mind of the artist, the producer and the user of these devotional media through a visual pastiche. This presentation would use several examples of posters and video clips from India and Pakistan to show the devotional pastiches being produced for the Muslim clients. The presentation would also be concluded with the screening of a 7-mins video called Jannat ki Rail (The Train to Heaven) produced by Yousuf Saeed using religious posters and a popular qawwali song.

Santhosh Sakhinala

Regional Nationalism and the urban context – icons, representation and politics

Though Telugu regional consciousness through nationalist lines has a history of about a century, the re-invocation of Telugu nationalism in the eighties has a significant relation to the city (Hyderabad), its economy and claims to the identity. This re-invocation enacted quickly as a consolidation of Teluguness with the establishment Telugudesam party by the star hero NTR and his subsequent assumption of power in the 1983 elections. So, during his long tenure of being chief minister of Andhra Pradesh he introduced many projects and events that are evocatively nationalist/regionalist.

In this paper I would be looking into the statues of Tank Bund, Hussain Sagar in Hyderabad, which were installed with the sole intention to exhibit the Telugu pride to the world, by NT Rama Rao. I would try to discuss how this narrative that is constructed on the Tank Bund is a reflection of the dominant ideological articulation of history and nation, and how certain people are appropriated through this narrative into the mainstream politics of representation. My paper would also attempt to relate this discussion to the city Hyderabad and the kind of changes that it underwent with this nationalist politics.

Swapna Sathish

The Sacred and the Profane: Authenticity and Hybridity in Contemporary Temple Painting

Paintings in the temples of Tamil Nadu are generally viewed as belonging to the 'classical tradition', bringing to mind Chola and Nayaka murals; this paper however takes an alternate view through considering contemporary murals in temples—whose saturated colour belonging to the popular kitsch idiom heightens mass appeal while emulating the world of poster signs and wall paintings that surrounds the devotee every day.

These temple paintings find their place as one among the 'multiple modernities' existing in the world of art today. They are 'modern', not merely in their style of representation, but in their ability to hybridise various aspects of the modern into a cohesive whole. Borrowings from other moderns such as cinema, photography and print media, which were never involved with temple murals of earlier times, and the ability to synthesise these borrowings allows them to be termed modern. In addition, inter-visibility grants these contemporary paintings authority and authenticity, through their references to and reflections of Ravi Varma oleographs, calendar art, political posters, theatre backdrops, photography and cinema.

Further, within the ideology of postmodernism these contemporary murals may be seen as quotidian—probably considered as being used to deconstruct the authority of the classical canon. Popular culture is usually seen as distinct from folk culture and high culture in that unlike the former it is mass-produced and unlike the latter it is mass-consumed. These contemporary paintings fit into the realm of popular culture in terms of their many borrowings not being confined to local identity as in folk art. They possess the 'authenticity' of hand-crafting as opposed to being machine-made or mass-produced. In being 'original,' while being derived from popular culture, these paintings lay claim to the "aura" of the original and thereby authenticity. Additionally they also possess the authenticity of being part of a living religious culture.

Their pervasive presence in large urban temples as well as the roadside shrines in Tamil Nadu asserts their acceptance by all strata of society. While these paintings appeal to the masses and may be thus seen as part of popular culture, their belonging within the temple precinct and their adherence, both ideologically and metaphorically, to an ancient classical tradition of painting seemingly accords these paintings a place in high culture. The borrowings from popular culture and the amalgamating of the different visual representations are held up against the earlier classical mural tradition, which has been acknowledged the status of high art.

Patricia Spyer

From Visible to Invisible Backdrop and Beyond: Muslim and Christian Sidewalk Art and Photographic Studios in Postwar Maluku, Indonesia

The paper explores the emergent thematization of the visual and the novel publicity of religion that are among the more spectacular dimensions of public culture in Post-Suharto Indonesia. Specifically, I consider the Christian and Muslim murals and billboards that have arisen in different Moluccan urban settings in the wake of a violent conflict carried out in religion's name between 1999 and 2002 in these islands. Both a masculine Moluccan youth culture and the enhanced contemporary value of the visual inform the "Muslim Power" murals of North Malukan Ternate and Tidore and the Christian billboards and murals featuring Christ's face and Christian sacred geographies that stand along Ambon City's main thoroughfares. At the same time, the Muslim and Christian street productions

diverge dramatically in the visual citizenships they evoke, their assumptions concerning mediation and circulation, and in the imagined scale and reach of Muslim versus Christian communities, with the significant contrast between them one of an infinite series of strong men comprising the Muslim umat, on the one hand, and an inward-looking, if universal, Christian enclave, on the other. Given that the young Christian and Muslim men who sponsor and produce the street art also pose before it on select occasions when the murals serve as the backdrops of impromptu street photo studios, questions of visible and invisible backdrops will also be addressed. Other issues to be considered include the relationship between aesthetico-epistemological transformation and political change and the particular ways in which a bottom-up visual history may be attuned to the affective intensities that animate the lifeworld of the street.

A. Srivathsan

Statues and the Politics of Urban Space in Chennai

Statues in Chennai are not 'invisible background noises' in the cityscape. They are symbiotically tethered, and derive and lend meaning to each other. This paper illustrates the relationship between the statuary, the making of Chennai and its contested politics. Contrary to the popular perception, installing statues in public space is not a creation of the Dravidian parties. Though they aggressively used statues to reconfigure spaces, such a project was conceived in the first place possibly because of the colonial and pre-colonial iconographic and spatial practices. In the 1980's, the cityscape was appropriated to mark the sub-caste turfs and since 2000, it is restructured to exhibit the vision of a global city. What appears constant in these changes is the role of statuary as a key device to mark the competing visions for the city.

Margaret Thomas

(Im)Possible: Possibilities of Digitally Enhanced Imagery in Tamil Cinema Advertising

Cinema is an urban phenomenon in terms of social space, production and function, and a clear indicator of modernity. A significant part of Indian popular culture and mass psyche, cinema is an economic and cultural institution, made and watched in a commercial context. The growth of Indian film production has been colossal and is closely associated with the rapid expansion of Indian cities and the resulting urban lifestyle. Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu, has been home to cinematic signs and sounds such as movie posters, hoardings, print advertisements, radio and music albums, where film making and viewing are a significant part of the urban experience.

Tamil cinema advertising in Chennai has always been a powerful and vibrant visual art form—be it in traversing the era of non-digital posters and hand-painted hoardings, or in moving into the realm of digital technology. In keeping with the changing times and advanced technologies, publicity for Tamil cinema has assimilated from hybrid sources to generate a new visual language.

The impulse for technological innovation is especially strong in the sphere of mass entertainment, more so in the Tamil cinema industry. Adapting to mass media that are industrial and technological, the business has thrived on delivering popular culture to huge audiences quickly and cheaply. Tamil film publicity has been a beneficiary of mechanical reproductive technology, with its advantage of speed, ubiquity and commercial potential, permitting greater reach through quick and inexpensive reproduction. And while, there has been a disruption of the traditional art, mechanical reproduction has nevertheless, profited the Tamil cinema industry.

The modern concept of design, and the process that underpinned it, superseded the traditional decorative arts, and the craft process that had generated them, as a result of the development of technology. The resulting mass consumer culture required that new commercial tasks were undertaken by designers and photographers who were tech-savvy and had an understanding of the consumer market. Technology has led to innovative trends in the marketing of Tamil cinema advertising. The digitally enhanced visuals of the film star as 'sign', affected the meanings constructed by the viewer.

The paper will examine the advertising of Tamil cinema that thrives on adapting latest technologies to its advantage in the promotion of its product. Tamil cinema publicity is post modern in that sense, that it has exploited the aspect of digital manipulation of graphic design and photography, the concepts of semiotics, intertextuality, simulacra and so on, thereby 'constructing' a visual experience favorable to its promotion.

Minna Valjakka

From scenic sights to streets and art galleries - the impact of site on graffiti in China

This paper focuses on the importance of the site to the creation of graffiti in China. My main questions are: Where has graffiti emerged in China? Have the location or the status of the site influenced on the intentions, content, format or style of graffiti? Or is it due to new forms and intentions that new sites are chosen for graffiti?

In the widest meaning graffiti is used to denote any kind of writing, inscription or scratching on a wall, or on any other surface, such as a tree or rock. Consequently, graffiti has existed in various forms for centuries, starting from simple epigrams and initials to large and multi-colored murals. Graffiti has been inscribed to any possible surface both in public, semi-public and private sites. In China, one of the earliest forms of traditional graffiti known today, are the calligraphic inscriptions made at the scenic sites to indicate the appreciation of the site. Although graffiti of this kind is still visible, it is rarely practiced, but instead, new forms and sites have been created.

Especially in the twentieth century the creation and sites of creating graffiti were diversified and spread on the streets, while at the beginning of the twenty-first century, graffiti is mostly emerging in the vicinity of art areas or inside art galleries. My primary aim is to show how the change of the sites of graffiti has been interrelated to the alteration of intentions, which are modified from aesthetic evaluation, to political, commercial and artistic creation. Consequently, also the formats and styles of graffiti have been changed. Based on extensive visual evidence, I will suggest that the shift in sites is primarily due to the new forms of contemporary graffiti.

Jayashree Venkatadurai

Placing Kannagi on the Beach Road: An Inquiry about Iconic Valences

In the early 1968, the DMK Government initiated the installation of about a dozen statues on the beach road alongside the Marina beach in Chennai. The statues were a curious set of European missionaries, Tamil poets, and political leaders among whom the iconic figure of Kannagi from the ancient Tamil epic Silapathikaram found a place. In about the same time, the government also initiated creating a sculptural memorial at the site of the submerged Chola capital, Poompuhar, where river Kaveri mingles with the sea some 300 kilometres away from Chennai. Poompuhar was the city where Kannagi lived and the monuments at the site were designed as per the literary descriptions found in Silapathigaram, the epic narrative of the story of Kannagi. My paper compares

the iconic representation of Kannagi at Poompuhar and in Chennai to derive the multiple valences of the figure of Kannagi. I also discuss the curious removal and re-installation of the statue on the beach road to support my reading of iconic valences and the particularity of the Kannagi statue as a fixture on the street.

Bios of the workshop and seminar participants

Shirley Abraham is a researcher and documentary film-maker based in Mumbai. She graduated in Journalism from Lady Shri Ram College, Delhi. Shirley has worked on content production with BBC Radio IV, Adlabs, Reliance Media and Fox Television Studios, India. She has scripted and directed episodes for Kiran (a ray of hope) - a nonfiction daily for Doordarshan, chronicling individual and community initiatives driving social change. She is writing and directing a series of documentaries for Mukti Foundation, Mumbai.

Together, Amit and Shirley have been working in collaboration on projects exploring the distinct visual culture of India. They received a fellowship from Tasveer Ghar/House of Pictures: A Digital Network of South Asian Popular Visual Culture, for a project studying dynamics of a unique public visual language, installing images of gods on tiles in street corners, employing them as sentinels against defilement of public spaces. They received the Arts Research and Documentation Grant from India Foundation for the Arts, for their work on the traveling tent cinemas of Maharashtra. For the project, they also received a short term fellowship from the Cluster of Excellence at Heidelberg University (2010) and were selected for the Goethe-Institute / Max Mueller Bhavan 50 Year Anniversary Grant Programme for 2010-11. They have recently received another short-term fellowship from the Cluster of Excellence, Heidelberg, for their project exploring the devotional visual culture at the shrine of Sailani Baba in Maharashtra. Both completed their M.A from the Mass Communication Research Centre at New Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia University in 2006.

V. Anamika is a Contemporary artist born in Neelankarai, Chennai, Tamilnadu, a student of Shri. S. Dhanapal, an eminent artist of India. She received her Master's degree in Fine Arts (Painting and Print Making) in 1999 from Chennai Government College of Fine Arts. To enhance her technical skill she undertook a course on Care of museum objects at Government Museum in 2005. In 2006, she went to Scotland as a visiting artist scholar to learn Japanese wood-block printing at Edinburgh printmaker's studio. She earned a Visiting scholarship to the UK to learn Enameling art at University of the West of England. Anamika participated in many National and International shows and received several awards and honors.

David Blamey has said of his practice, "I like the idea that the distance between the art world and the real world can be almost nothing. Framing, adjusting, assisting, promoting, thinking-about and reassessing what's already there, that is my work". A guiding principle behind this objective is the idea that our perception of the world can never meet our understanding of it; his projects often pivot on a dialectical tension between things that are so familiar that they have become almost invisible and ideals that are somehow always out of reach. This struggle to grasp what can be seen is frequently informed by his interest in belief systems from parallel fields of activity, whether it is the spiritual movement, science, society or the art world itself. Resisting conclusions in favour of better understanding the problem, the minimal beauty of his installations, exhibitions, books and objects illuminates reality by arguing for a different order of the world. He is the proprietor of the publishing house Open Editions and director of the Critical Forum Programme in the School of Communications at the Royal College of Art in London. His edited books include 'Living Pictures: Perspectives On the Film Poster in India' (2005) and 'Here, There, Elsewhere: Dialogues On Location and Mobility' (2002).

Ranjan De is presently Course Leader - Foundation Design & HOD - Communication Design at Pearl Academy of Fashion, Chennai. The past 8 years he has been travelling Pan-India exploring innovative

approaches to integrating educational streams in both schools and design colleges across India, through a series of workshops. He has 25 years of experience in the Visual Communication industry primarily in Advertising, Packaging, Printing & Publishing, Documentary and Performing Arts photography, Children's Book Illustration, Theatre set and Properties Design, Animation and Puppetry. He is an alumnus of the National Institute of Design, Ahmadabad; where he did 5 years of Visual Communications from 1980 to '85.

Roos Gerritsen is an anthropologist whose research focuses on popular visual culture in South India. Her research interests lie primarily in the fields of vernacular image productions, the fringes of cinema and notions of street culture, publics, and public space.

She obtained her MA degree in Anthropology at Leiden University, The Netherlands. Her MA research provided insight into notions of romance and memory through a study of wedding videos and photo albums in Tamil Nadu.

Since 2006, Roos is working on a PhD project on Tamil film fan clubs and their production, dissemination, and consumption of imagery of their movie hero. Her research looks into the role of this imagery employed by fans but also by other urban poor in the production of visibility and the formation of publics. Roos has published several articles on Tamil fan clubs and Chennai's recent beautification project.

Gita is a post graduate in psychology from the Madras University, Gita is a painter and an art documentarist working from Chennai. Her paintings are semi-abstract which simultaneously explore colour, texture, line and form, not as layers but as integral to one another. She has been exhibiting her works consistently in the last 15 years.

Gita is also into making documentary films on painters and sculptors since 2005. She regards film-making as an extension of fine arts, which is also their subject matter. Filmography includes documentaries on RB Bhaskaran, Prafulla Mohanti, Achuthan Kudallur, Chantal Gowa and Vidyashanker Sthapathy. Gita works as Program Officer with the Madras Craft Foundation.

Baishali Ghosh Assistant Professor in Art History & Visual Studies, Department of Fine Arts, University of Hyderabad.

Her research includes testimony of lords' trial: terracotta religious structures of 'Bengal', Art-history in between State and its Artistic Heritage, Archive, Exhibition and Academia. At present engaged in researching on 'vernacular art and architecture'.

Her selected publications include articles - Dolvi Ispat Plantation and its landscaping project (2008), "Art History beyond Academia' (2007). Her selected conferences are symposium 'Archiving the Art Histories: Exigencies and Challenges in Pedagogy and Research' (2009) 12th International Conference of International Planning History Society (IPHS 2006). She was member of the Academic Committee in the symposium Cultures in Diaspora: Journeys and (Dis)placements in the Contemporary Cultural by EUMEDNET Research Group, University of Malaga, (2009). She is the recipient of Nehru Memorial Trust Fellowship, Small Study Research Grant of Nehru Trust for Indian Collection at Victoria & Albert Museum grant.

Stephen Inglis is an anthropologist and art historian who specialises in the artistic traditions of India. He has worked extensively with folk and popular arts, particularly in Bengal and Tamilnadu. Inglis was for over 25 years a curator and Director of Research and Collections at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Among the exhibitions he has curated are "India: the Living Arts" at the CMC in

2000/2001 and “Maharaja”, currently at the Art Gallery of Ontario. He is currently Adjunct Professor of Art History at Carleton University.

Kiran Keswani is an architect with an interest in Urban Design. She has studied architecture in Bombay from 1983-88 and was at the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies (IHS) at Rotterdam in 1996. She has trained with the architect Balkrishna Doshi in Ahmedabad. She has published in MARG – a Magazine for the Arts, Architecture+Design, Indian Architect & Builder and in the International Journal of Building Information. She currently teaches a course ‘Revitalization of City cores’ in the Masters Program in Habitat Design at the BMS College of Architecture in Bangalore. She writes at www.indianbazaar.blogspot.com and can be reached at kiranmkeswani@gmail.com

Kumar

Philip Lutgendorf is Professor of Hindi and Modern Indian Studies and has taught in the University of Iowa’s Department of Asian and Slavic Languages and Literature since 1985. He regularly offers Hindi language classes as well as courses on written and oral narrative traditions of South Asia, including Indian film. His book on the performance of the Hindi Ramayana, *The Life of a Text* (University of California Press, 1991) won the A. K. Coomaraswamy Prize of the Association for Asian Studies. He received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 2002-03 for his research on the popular Hindu “monkey-god” Hanuman, which has appeared as *Hanuman’s Tale, The Messages of a Divine Monkey* (Oxford University Press, 2007). His interests include epic performance traditions, folklore and popular culture, and mass media. He maintains a website devoted to popular Hindi cinema, a.k.a. “Bollywood” (www.uiowa.edu/~incinema). He is presently translating the *Ramcharitmanas* of Tulsidas for the Murty Classical Library of India/Harvard University Press, and researching a book on the popularization of chai in 20th century India.

Amit Madheshiya a graduate in English Literature from Hindu College, New Delhi, is now a Mumbai-based photographer pursuing long-term documentary projects. His work on the nomadic cinemas of Maharashtra won the World Photography Award in the Entertainment category in Cannes, and the Grand Prize at the Humanity Photo Awards in China. For his work on migrant children in metropolitan cities, he has won awards from the Commonwealth, and recently, the National Media Fellowship from National Foundation for India. He was nominated for UNICEF Photo of the Year in 2007 and 2008. He also writes for *Himal South Asian* magazine.

Sadanand Menon is a nationally reputed ‘arts editor’, popular teacher of ‘cultural journalism’, widely published photographer, arts curator and prolific writer and speaker at seminars on politics, ecology and the arts.

He is currently Adjunct Faculty at the Asian College of Journalism, Chennai, where he conducts an elective course on ‘Arts & Culture Journalism’ and lectures on ‘Photojournalism’. He is on the Apex Advisory Board of the National Museum, Delhi, the Executive Committee, Lalit Kala Akademi, Delhi and Managing Trustee, SPACES, An Arts Foundation, Chennai.

A former Arts Editor with India's leading financial daily *The Economic Times*, he has practiced and taught critical alternatives in the media, and edited interventionist journals.

A long-time collaborator with the legendary dancer/choreographer Chandralekha, he is deeply

involved with issues connected with the creation of a contemporary Indian dance. Currently, he is working towards setting up in Chennai a publicly accessible archive of the late choreographer's work.

Partha Mitter, Hon.D.Lit (Courtauld Institute, London) is Professor Emeritus in Art History at the University of Sussex, Member of Wolfson College Oxford and Honorary Fellow, Victoria & Albert Museum. He has been a Fellow of Clare Hall, Cambridge; Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton; Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC; Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Mass and Getty Research Institute. He was also Radhakrishnan Memorial Lecturer at All Souls College, Oxford. His Books include *Much Maligned Monsters: History of European Reactions to Indian Art*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1977; Chicago University Press Paperback, 1992; *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1850-1922*, Cambridge University Press, 1994 and *The Triumph of Modernism: India's Artists and the Avant-Garde 1922-1947*, Reaktion Books 2007, and numerous articles.

Murugan is a banner artist from Pondicherry. Together with his brother he is the owner of Raja Arts.

Kathryn Myers received her B.A in art from St. Xavier College in Chicago and her MFA in painting from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. A painter whose work has been strongly inspired by Indian art and culture, she has had numerous exhibitions in the United States, Europe and India including at the Dakshinachitra Gallery, Chennai, Fundacao Oriente, Panjim, The International Center, Dona Paula, Goa, Indigo Gallery, Chomandal, and The American Center, New Delhi. She has curated several exhibitions involving Indian art including "Masala, Diversity and Democracy in South Asian Art" at the William Benton Museum of Art, the University of Connecticut, "Source of Departure, Site of Arrival" Middlesex County College, Edison, New Jersey and an upcoming exhibition, "Radiate" Art of the South Asian Diaspora in the United States. She is the recipient of Fulbright Scholarships to India in 2002 and 2010-11. Her current Fulbright involves interviewing contemporary artists in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal. She has been a Professor of Art at the University of Connecticut, Storrs since 1985.

Neeta Omprakash is an art critic & curator based in Panaji, Goa. She has done her MFA in art criticism from M.S. University, Baroda and Post-diploma in comparative mythology from Mumbai University. She has taught art history and aesthetics at Chitra Kala Parishat, Bangalore; KAVA, Mysore; S.N. School Hyderabad as a visiting faculty.

She has contributed art reviews to the local newspapers and magazines and has written catalogues for the art exhibitions in Goa. At present she writes for Goan Observer, a weekly tabloid published from Goa. Neeta has done some programs on Indian miniatures & has done features on few artists for the local TV Channel Prudent Media. She has curated two projects sponsored by Fundacao Oriente with Goan artists, one was based on the theme of myth & fairy tales and other was a collaborative project with visual art and theater. She was invited as a guest faculty by the Department of Art & Art History at University of Connecticut and Eastern Connecticut; Department of Women's studies at Yale University; department of Fine Arts at Montclair University & Department of inter-disciplinary studies at Ohio University. Her area of work is representation of myths in visual arts.

Shivaji K Panikkar had been the Head, Department of Art History and Aesthetics, M.S. University of Baroda. His research and publications are in the areas of pre-modern and modern Indian art. His books include *Saptamatrka Worship and Sculpture: An Iconological Interpretation of Conflicts and Resolution in the 'Storied' Brahmanical Icons* (1997), *Twentieth Century Indian Sculpture: Last Two Decades* (edited) (2000), *Towards A New Art History: Studies in Indian Art* (co-edited) (2003), *Art of Ancient India: Contextualizing Social Relations* (co-edited) (2004), *Art of Medieval India: Contextualizing Social Relations* (co-edited) (2005), and several exhibition catalogues. Currently he is engaged in editing the books, *Art and Activism: Articulating Resistance and Elites and the Popular: Interfaces of India's Art History*. He has coordinated six national conferences around the theme of 'New Art History' from 2000 to 2007 in the Dept. of Art History and Aesthetics (MSU Vadodara) and one international conference on Archiving Art (Feb. 2009). Apart from research on queer cultural practices, currently he is also engaged in setting up an institution named ARQ: Archive, Research and Queer Cultural Practice. He is one of the Project Directors of the five traveling workshops on the theme *Curating Indian Visual Culture: Theory and Practice* which is an initiative of India Foundation for the Arts (IFA), Bangalore, and funded by Jamsetji Tata Trust. See <http://www.curationtheory.com/> and Blogs: <http://queer-way-art.blogspot.com/> <http://students-me-and-art-history.socialgo.com/>

N. Ramachandran is a contemporary artist born in Paramakudi, Madurai, Tamil Nadu. He received his bachelor's degree (distinction) and master's degree in painting and printmaking from the Govt. College of Fine Arts, University of Madras in 1999. To enhance his technical skill he undertook a course on Care of museum objects at Chennai Museum in 2005. He went to Edinburgh on a Visiting Artist Scholar to Scotland to learn Photo-polymer Etching at Edinburg printmakers in 2006. In 2008 he went to Edinburgh College of Arts on Charles Wallace India Trust Award, to learn Glass making a special course BA (hons.). Other than these international credits, he has received many national awards and state awards and participated in many national and international shows.

Vishal Rawlley holds a diploma in film and video communication. He has worked as a storyboard artist, documentary filmmaker, graphic designer and new-media artist. Working as a media-practitioner for over a decade, he is actively engaged in research and experimentation in areas of popular media and urban sub-culture.

Martijn de Rooij As a student of Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University, Martijn de Rooij focused on material culture and museum studies. For his MA research he did fieldwork at multiple museum sites in Northeast India, and concentrated on exhibition formats and museological practices of cultural representation. He anticipates embarking on a PhD project in which he would like to explore two museum models in Kolkata - of ethnography, and of modern/contemporary art - and the different display values (and hence, different forms of "museumization") they imply.

Yousuf Saeed is an independent researcher and documentary filmmaker based in New Delhi, having produced several films related to Indian culture and arts since last two decades. His extensive documentation of the popular poster art of Indian Muslims brings him to Tasveer Ghar, a growing digital archive of south Asian popular visual culture. Several documentary films directed by Yousuf, such as *Khayal Darpan*, *Jannat ki Rail*, and *Basant* have been screened at national and international film festivals and academic venues. Yousuf is the author of the forthcoming book "*My Mecca Their Mecca: The Muslim Popular Visual Culture of India*," Routledge (2011).

More information about Yousuf's work can be seen at these links: www.tasveerghar.net | www.ektara.org

Santhosh Sakhinala is presently working as a guest faculty in the Fine Arts Department, SN School, and University of Hyderabad. He is also registered as a research scholar in the Cultural Studies department, EFL University. He has completed M.V.A from Faculty of Fine Arts, MSU, Baroda and B.F.A from Kala Bhavana, Visva Bharati, Santiniketan. His research interests are City, Architecture and Popular Culture.

Swapna Sathish is an art historian and a freelance art critic. She is Assistant Professor in the Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, Chennai. Further to a research degree in Art History from the UK, she received her doctorate from the University of Madras for her thesis on Contemporary Temple Murals in Tamil Nadu. She also has a special interest in eighteenth century colonial art in Madras.

Selvam is a banner artist from Chennai. He works for J.P. Krishna Banner Company.

Patricia Spyer holds the Chair of Cultural Anthropology of Contemporary Indonesia at Leiden University and is Global Distinguished Professor at New York University's Center for Religion & Media and Department of Anthropology. She is the author of *The Memory of Trade: Modernity's Entanglements on an Eastern Indonesian Island* (Duke 2000), editor of *Border Fetishisms: Material Objects in Unstable Spaces* (Routledge 1998), and co-editor of the *Handbook of Material Culture* (Sage 2006). She has published, among other topics, on violence, media and visual culture, materiality, and religion. Her current book project *Orphaned Landscapes* focuses on the mediations of violence and postviolence in the recent religiously-inflected conflict in the Moluccas, Indonesia. *Images That Move*, a volume co-edited with Mary Steedly, is under consideration with the School of Advanced Research Press.

A. Srivathsan is a Deputy Editor with *The Hindu* and writes on cities and architecture. He is a trained architect and urban designer and taught for ten years at Anna University before shifting to journalism. Srivathsan was a Fulbright postdoctoral fellow in 2002.

Margaret Thomas is Associate Professor and Head of Undergraduate Department of Fine Arts at Stella Maris College, Chennai. A recipient of the United Board of Christian Higher Education in Asia (UBCHEA) fellowship for leadership in 2007 & 2008 she trained at Wellesley College, Massachusetts, USA, and Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines. She was awarded the Elizabeth Luce Moore Award for 'Best Fellow for 2007-2008' batch. She is a freelance graphic designer and has won the prestigious AdClub award in the print advertisement category. Margaret has recently submitted her doctoral thesis titled 'Selling Cinema: The Impact of Digital Technology on Outdoor Tamil Film Advertising' to the University of Madras.

Minna Valjakka Ph.D. candidate of Art History, graduated in East Asian Studies in the University of Helsinki in 2005. Her main focus has been Chinese visual culture and currently she is finishing her Ph.D. thesis “Many Faces of Mao Zedong” on contemporary Chinese art depicting Chairman Mao. Besides contemporary art, she has researched on the emergence of graffiti in China during her yearly research trips to China. She has won a scholarship to study one academic year in Fudan University in Shanghai, 2001-2002, and in the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing, 2006-2007.

Jayashree Venkatadurai is an art historian, curator and practicing artist exhibited in New York and Paris. My poetry collection in Tamil with an anthology of 80 poems is on Print. Working as a lecturer in the Department of Visual Communication, D.G.Vaishnav College, Chennai.