

# KOCHI

Create relevance that can enable audiences to seize new opportunities and keep pace with knowledge

Encourage individual curiosity that can move with sensitivity toward informed opinion, breaking the barriers of preconceptions

Relay experience as openness, rejecting standardized responses, with viewers/audiences as co-creators and co-conspirators

# DECLARATION

Encourage audiences to become authors of their own experience and to understand experience as a fraught terrain and as a process with its own ambiguities, challenges and rewards

Move beyond instruction toward questioning that invites mediation and interpretation

# FOR

Make space for diversity, without preconditions and expectations

Value collaborative processes over individuality, and accept fresh responsibilities as informed, empowered and participating audiences

Build respect for the curatorial task and for the importance of archives and cultural resources which must be available in the public domain

# AUDIENCES

Create a culture of scholarship that avoids gate-keeping and encourages inclusion

Build a more level playing field in which the importance of collaboration between artists, scientists and audiences is recognized as a foundation for responsible citizenship in a just and equitable society

Recognize education as the space in which these capacities and values need to be respected and nurtured

# At a meeting on 5 March 2019, in Fort Kochi, Kerala, India at the Kochi-Muziris Biennale 2018 the Exchange & Flow workshop participants discussed a first draft of the ‘Kochi Declaration for Audiences’ set out herein.

**The Exchange & Flow Writing Workshop** came together in March 2019 to explore the question ‘What do audiences do with artworks?’ and to support the rallying call of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale for creating “a public stage that will belong to everybody who wants to claim it”. The Workshop explored the perceptual apparatuses, experiences and associations at play when artworks are publicly presented. It shared insights from a research project led by Prof. dr. Michael Punt at Transtechnology Research, University of Plymouth, UK which examined the relationship between artistic and industrial/commercial media practices at times of technological change and which identified audiences as key influencers and stakeholders.\*

The Workshop goal was to explore collaboration between viewers and artworks and gain new insights in order to understand what mediates between artists and audiences, and what audiences do with their experiences of art. Through this exploration, the critical importance emerged of the need to create, preserve and share archival resources, to promote the writing of art and science from the global south, and to encourage new writing from non-academics.

Toward this purpose, the resources explored at the workshop included new techniques for eliciting experience led by Dr Hannah Drayson; revisiting a paper on the ‘Free Play’ of audience by Dr Martha Blassnigg (2013) relating to science, conjuring and advertising; creative workshops in non-written forms led by Christophe Boyer (voice), Murielle Ikareth (movement), Jacqui Knight (photography) and Udit Parekh (drawing); reviewing a film-in-progress about a pioneering audience-led television experiment conducted by the Indian Space Research Organisation in the 1970s/80s

## The Writers

Shaiста Bannu, Celina Baljeet Basra, Sahaj Umang Singh Bhatia, Amit Bhavsar, Samira Bose, Harshada Desai, Mohita Ghosal, Diksha Gupta, Archit Guha, Hamsini Hariharan, Salma Jamal, Anushka Jastraj, Vrushiti Jasubhai, Rohana Jeyaraj, Faris Kallayil, Dinaz Kalwachhala, Sathees Kumar, Rupsa Kundu, Annalisa Mansukhani, Seema Massot, Dr. Lalitha Poluru, Ananya Rajoo, Asmita Sarkar, Siyad Bin Sayid, Soorya S. Shenoy, Jo Simons, Ajithal Sivalal

by Dinaz Kalwachhala and Dr Joanna Griffin; and with prof Ashoke Chatterjee revisiting a UN-supported international design conference at the National Institute of Design (Ahmedabad) in 1979 which culminated in the historic Ahmedabad Declaration on Design for Development calling for contemporary streams of knowledge to collaborate toward addressing real user needs across the globe. The outcomes include an improvised writing performance exploring audience experience, new filmworks, an anthology of new writing proposals and a framework for publication in Leonardo, the journal of the International Society for Arts, Science and Technology, a key partner in the writing workshop.

Participants shared efforts now on-going that demonstrated the importance of such ‘exchange and flow’. These included the radical approach to audience outlined by the Director of the new Science Gallery Bengaluru Dr Jahnvi Phalkey; a critique of the ethics of experience by Professor Sundar Sarukkai together with an overview of the obstacles and opportunities involved in publishing from India; and the experience of knowledge exchange with audiences at the Eye Film Institute in The Netherlands presented by Senior Curator Mark-Paul Meyer in building audio-visual archives that capture the extraordinary technological and social changes in media development and use over the past century.\*\*

\* ‘Technology, Exchange and Flow: Artistic media practices and commercial application’ funded by the Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) with partners VU University, Amsterdam; University of Applied Arts, Vienna; EYE Film Institute, Netherlands and Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision.

\*\* The Exchange & Flow Writing Workshop was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK and led by Transtechnology Research, University of Plymouth with partners Kochi Biennale Foundation and Leonardo, International Society for the Arts, Science and Technology

## Through its reflection, a consensus emerged at the Kochi Exchange & Flow Workshop on the need for a collaborative effort to build a foundation of values and principles that can empower audiences, disciplines and practitioners in these ways:

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Relay experience as openness, rejecting standardized responses, with viewers/audiences as co-creators and co-conspirators

Encourage audiences to become authors of their own experience and to understand experience as a fraught terrain and as a process with its own ambiguities, challenges and rewards

Move beyond instruction toward questioning that invites mediation and interpretation

Make space for diversity, without preconditions and expectations

Value collaborative processes over individuality, and accept fresh responsibilities as informed, empowered and participating audiences

Build respect for the curatorial task and for the importance of archives and cultural resources which must be available in the public domain

Create a culture of scholarship that avoids gate-keeping and encourages inclusion

Build a more level playing field in which the importance of collaboration between artists, scientists and audiences is recognized as a foundation for responsible citizenship in a just and equitable society

Recognize education as the space in which these capacities and values need to be respected and nurtured.