

EDITOR'S NOTE

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The journey of this call started from a deeply personal note, one situated in my artistic journey from Karnal to now. From a rigorous, imitational skill based practice to finding myself denying all that was inculcated and given; In a constant confrontation with an unknown, volatile definition of art, that slowly brings to light the constructed binaries of legible and non-legible, art and non-art, professional and amateur, practice and theory. This vocabulary of binaries was suffocating, yet it set in quickly that existing structures fed off these binaries to survive, and even thrive. Every structure references the past, albeit in a linearity. Often, we find ourselves thrown into and spearhead it without our intent. What was then, the way to move forward and can it be done without carefully taking note of what is now, and what is our place in this paradigm that evolves with us? Does the past and its lingering have to be such an absolute? Can the artistic gesture in the contemporary allow us to become nimble, where the linear torpedo of history is transformed into a constellation of ideas and events to be drawn from, through our contextual lenses and at our own pace(s)?

The first encounter with this lingering, was felt while pursuing bachelors at the College of Art in New Delhi; An 81-year-old recipe laid down the ingredients to make a traditional, classic dish, with extremely detailed and specific measurements. Within this veil of an acquired, hired taste hides an imposed legible; one that kills any deviations in ideas, media to translate, and the being of the artist. The 'tradition' brings a stasis that safeguards itself through the rubric of sacrilege and an unknown cultural loss- reducing the free, energised, inherently unstable artistic gesture to a fabricated stability. These discussions even then with friends over bread pakodas (Indian snack) and Mandi House daal chawal (lentils and rice) were always intense; but we yet did not have the language, or the confidence to articulate such thoughts- even though they had scale, lived experience, and a thriving richness within them.

With time, it became apparent that these concerns, were not merely specific to us, but something plaguing curriculums, artists, and institutes across India, and with exposure to contemporary paradigms- throughout



the world. Whispers continued to echo and travel, albeit within extremely intimate and informal settings. Young graduates, insecure and thrown into the 'market', could not risk being judged, or for that matter, threaten their position within the 'artistic circle'. Repercussions of indulging in free expression at government institutes, and a culture that equates questioning with disobedience had forced us to be wary of people, their motivations, and especially of projecting our ideas of work, or art, and god forbid, ideologies.

While these whispers in intimate gatherings and solidarities seemed arbitrary to many; these associations gave way to something profound. New solidarities and friendships, an environ of care and trust pushed one to think of a pluralistic vision of artistic practices, where we could free our imaginative scales, let go of inhibitions and open ourselves to a new world of art that is contouring itself around us. These conversations not only continued, but intensified. Whether they took place under the starry skies of First Draft gatherings on a terrace in Vasant Kunj; or over a glass of old monk mixed in warm water in Big Banana; sipping chilled nimbu paani with friends on a stall in Connaught Place; having fresh samosas and sipping chai at Studio A68; eating delicious kebabs sitting in Studio Jangpura; or through 4 a.m. provocations in the night in their Eureka moment. These affinities kept resonating, generating a constellation that has not been hesitant to engineer new imaginations of artistic gestures through inhabitation, gatherings, and space making. A need for an interface also became apparent- where these mappings could be marked and continue to generate further articulations.

A prompt for a publication started to take shape, one that would not be restricted to textual contributions, but articulations in all formats capable of generating a mobile and discursive sphere. The first round of invitations heavily focused on specific institutions, universities, and art colleges, within which we were placed contextually. The inquiries ranged from thinking about colonial hangovers; the generation of an ultimate 'ism'; the intertwining of the womb and the institute; tracing an inherent ontological deficiency within structures; navigating purity, stasis, and sacrilege in the institutional context; and thinking of integrity, intensity, and the rough edges of the structures we inhabit.



The subsequent round saw an abstraction of what an institution could be- this brought together thinking on structures, formalizations, and hierarchies- of orders of knowledge, of language, and of resistance. The contributions here, dealt with patriarchal institutions and the rigidity they cultivate; the coronation of spectacle that structures uphold as a mask; The ways in which the market anxieties shapes artistic practices; the relationship that artists have with night and labour; and thinking around thresholds, capacities and rules that inform our individual and collective perceptions.

The final round, saw interpretations and navigations around the fundamentals of what structures are, and practices that propose new forms and what they should hold dear. From bringing to life spaces sustained by care; The urges to find new axioms of practice and working while navigating through complex, economic and social frictions; Gatherings that create and reflect on practices through invitation as a form; The residues of gatherings, collaborations, and their form; and of piracy, fermentation, fusions, and rogue recipes.

This call has continued to gather resonances throughout the months since its interception, to open up how institutions, and structures linger within artistic practice in all scales and densities. The call as a phenomenon is so inherent within our beings, primal, and yet so potent- from a call to duty, to wake up, to rest; calls in need, in love, in friendship; a call to get together; and a call to cumulatively ponder, and reconfigure ourselves and by extension, our realities. This call, will continue to echo and travel, in all axes, planes, and realms- traversing through the rifts and ridges that inform the topology of our milieus.

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