

Editor's Note

Rahul Juneja
10th August, 2025



In August 2025, Hekh published Call #1- a seminal issue marking the experience of the student-artist and younger artists in India- an area thoroughly unaddressed in the art milieu. The issue detailed how art academies, institutions and curriculums in India linger within artistic practices; how artists navigate the complex social, cultural and economic landscape; and of resonant forms of being and spaces emerging within Delhi and larger Indian art landscape. From decays emerging as institutional ontology – to tea cups that are sites of resistance against patriarchal and gender confirmations— to lukewarm lubricants registering the temperature, viscosity, smell and synergy of artistic gatherings. The issue sought to pinpoint the (physical, contextual, affective) location of these cohorts through echolocation(s). Amidst large continuums of history and simultaneously unfolding contemporaries, this was an important gesture to create grounds for mobility, as well as access through disciplines, geographies and time.

Hybrid, multiform and polyphonic, Call #1 accommodated video, audio, graphic novels, poems, as well as other image-text intersections. The issue pointed itself towards dialoging with multiple legacies, legibilities and perceptual worlds. Here, artists claimed writing as an artistic gesture, developed forms to collapse colonial divides between theory and practice, and worked through structures, institutional navigation and mediation as artistic media. These engagements further gave way to reworking of the protocols of activation, through which such knowledge is produced, imbibed and shared.

The first activation, a two day gathering cum symposium which happened at Studio Hekh in Mayur Vihar in september- saw subtle shifts in protocols of time, informality and hybridity in presenting and discussions take form. Each presentation went on for 15 minutes, but the discussion deliberately was kept at least *five* times long. This dilation created opportunity for dialogue amidst young artists as they navigated insecurities, vulnerabilities, and contexts of their different socio-economic and privilege backgrounds in real time. In November, the second activation unfolded at the India International Center in New Delhi- a sought after venue for 'canon' art events; where again young artists and thinkers reflected on the issue and the questions it opened through a colloquium. Multiple



walks, discussions over dinners, and whisperings in various forms of coming together continued to give new lives to these inquiries throughout the year. The Call found home in multiple artist run spaces, museums, academic institutions, and libraries in India and around the world- also becoming a catalyst to rethink pedagogy in multiple formal and informal settings.

Following these navigations through institutional lingerings, counterings, and morphing of protocols in the last call- a need to dive deep into space and its constitutions emerged. To think of space-making as an artistic gesture, but not just through its production or construction. Also through its embodiment, its holding, and its transforming. Intersection of different moments propelled the shaping of the issue; From exposure to models of convening, thinking and being from Ruangrupa; Womanifesto; CAMP Studio; Raqs Media Collective; to multiple spaces in Delhi including in Jangpura Studio, First Draft, Studio A68, Progressive Artists League, Voices against Genocide, Synth Hang; Not Quite, Homografiska, Studio Växt, Dalslands museum in Sweden; and a generous introduction to Hong Kong's rich tradition of artistic spaces and initiatives like Para Site, Spring Workshop, Studio 3000 and 100 Square Feet Park by Michelle Wong. The latter session also prompted the idea of artistic spaces as sites of intellectual refuge (contrasting traditional curriculums and methodologies); a key axis that helped shape the framework of this issue.

The act of creating, extending and co-existing has lingered since the earliest examples of art within the world. The first instance of this was perhaps the earliest cave paintings- a marking of the critical moment that reflected becoming self conscious with the world, and to extend it. The hand at Maltravieso cave, stretches itself out to be seen, and to be touched by beings of a future history; "We were here, and hope you are too "; All interconnected via the cosmic dust we all carry within us through molecular time. Invitations harbour hunger- as manifestations of the desire to extend and accommodate, interfacing in different forms.

The very idea of space, inherently brings architecture and topography with it. We are topographical beings- trying to locate ourselves constantly. Whether in stillness or in movement; in architectures of emotion, affect, past and the present; of



knowledge, (un)compressions, condensations, and of course, the tactile, the physical, and the material.

Deep histories of wandering animate us in the daily, and as we have evolved to recognise, and relish topographies beyond the tactile: the meta-wanderings of consciousness lead us to alleyways of connections across histories, temporalities and geographies. After all, What is the urge — to go to ruins, read an exceptional piece of literature, watch a grainy filmed interview, visit your ancestral home; to sit with a friend for coffee, stare at the stars, hold hands; to fictionalise, to document, to collect stones? Networked ecologies of the self and its resonance through multiple relationalities, are what keeps us charged. The world we inhabit, is material for itself.

Thus through this edition, we ask: What does it mean to create, and inhabit spaces that are at once porous and resistant, visible and invisible, fleeting and sedimented? To accommodate the unseen, unheard, unspoken, un-lived? We see the artistic figure placing itself in a relationally evolving, affective and resonant terrain. This in turn, produces a charge to move within capital, ambition, and contemporary flux. In our globally unfolding volatilities, a need emerges to trace both intimacy and distance in such gestures, through an expanding triangulation. One which involves tracking, building, and manifesting extending paradigms of 'place', 'refuge' and 'intelligence'.

***Place**, a constellation of continuously morphing presences. Shaped by resonant affinities, friendship, disagreements and shared thought, as they play, navigate through spectrums of visibility, context, appearance, relevance and opacity. A sedimentation of ideas, vulnerabilities, anxieties, and hopes, while being catalysts for thought, dialogue and resistance.*

***Intelligence**, which moves beyond rationality. Thinking of mutable and embodied forms of being- where sensoriums, intelligible performativities, explosive spontaneity and dilated existence marks our intersections with life.*

***Refuge**, which engulfs all displacements- corporeal, epistemic, affective. A space, that breathes, ages, dissolves, grows and morphs.*

Extending this triangulation, the 15 contributors in this Call also trace and build different realms, each alive and breathing with their own desires, densities and textures.

A graveyard, emerges as a site of resurgence and fertility-intertwining philosophy, oppression, and ecology in defiance of institutional coherence. Gatherings become active sites of resistance in climates of suppression- navigating performativity, permanence, sanitisation and censoring. "A bare minimum-cinema, emerges from the sudraverse, against the sudraverse." A recall through obscure narratives, contours co-existence as a continuous process, thinking through cultural memory, and resistance. Chatters, emerge as refuge and markers of intersection of life and art, invoking (un)comfortable thresholds. A fig makes apparent the multi-nodal formation of the self through different artistic spaces. An insurance policy, reveals systems of institutionalisation and immortalisation for artists through rituals of calculated redistribution of resources.

Here, a plate of food becomes a plane where rituals of eating, sitting, and sharing meet acts of consumption — propelling and churning thought. A gathering, held together by peering and mangoes- weaves selfhood and explores gendered experiences of power, domesticity, religion through familial recalls and Mughal Zananas. Inanimate objects and involuntarily animated human bodies, make apparent an exploitative liminal resting space for toilet cleaners in Hong Kong malls- unfolding through pressure, light, sound and smell.

An urge to move infra-structurally, ends up in creation of the Sweden's first Queer museum in a village. Sketchbooks, mutate and become sites of transition, transcendence, revisiting and recall. A viscerally embodied recalling of intimacy, weaves carefully experience, affect and its intersection with art making. Faint growls of gorillas whisper around the cage of an unauthored space in College of Art, New Delhi. A telepathic connection, between Mexico and Delhi, moves through lapses in consciousness and internet worlds, towards formation of a new civic, intercaste world order that can escape capitalism.



Throughout these tracings and conjurings, we see intense reflections and an urge of model-making emerging; where cultural practitioners create intensities and mobilities in, with, and through structures. These navigations engage with scale, duration, intensity, intimacy, history- where the world isn't alien, but something accessible, and most importantly, malleable. A call thus, pulsates daily, to exchange, transmute, and be with the world- creating and holding space to co-exist, co-create, and co-inhabit; while also leaving the possibility to examine and contest these models with variations in lived realities. What remains constant, through these Microcosms, and Macrocosms, are the multiple mutating realms of ideas and realities which allow for compressions, and decompressions, to zoom in and out, to let them breathe- and us, with them.

Towards generating grounds, for oscillating between the personal, the worldly, the intimate, the local, the immediate and the transcendent.

