

RHYTHM ALLIANCES

COLOMBOSCOPE / EDITION NINE

COLOMBOSCOPE 2026: Rhythm Alliances

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Contents

Festival Introduction	06
Song of the Circling Spirit – Hajra Haider Karrar	14
 Barefoot Gallery	 18
Charwei Tsai	20
Haseeb Ahmed	22
Mekh Limbu	24
Pinaree Sanpitak	28
Raven Chacon	30
Saadia Mirza	34
Zarina Muhammad	36
 Colpetty Town House	 38
Aboothahir Al Wajahath	40
Basma Al Sharif	44
Chamindika Abeysinghe	46
Dinar Sultana	48
Imaad Majeed	50
Jegatheeswaran Keshavan	52
Joséfa Ntjam	54
Jovita Alvares	56
Mahesha Kariyapperuma	60
KMRU	62
Sabeen Omar	66
Sarah Kazmi	68
Tashyana Handy and Sakina Aliakbar	70
 Rio Complex	 72
Basir Mahmood	74
Dinoj Mahendranathan	78
Tharmapalan Tilaxan	80
Yara Asmar	82
Lapses – Yara Asmar	84

Radicle Gallery	88
Kaimurai	90
Kavan Balasuriya	94
Moe Satt	96
Mohammad Ali Talpur	98
Naiza Khan	100
Nina Mangalanayagam with Marie Bergqvist and the Transnational Adoptee Choir: The Whale	104
Seher Shah	108
Stephen Champion	110
Tissa De Alwis	114
Vivian Caccuri	118
 Soul Studio	 120
Atiyyah Khan	122
A Journey into the Sun – Atiyyah Khan	124
Ayumi Paul	130
Gayan Hemarathne	132
 Uncanny Listening & Resonant Publics – Suvani Suri	 134
 Echoes and Reverbs	 138
Full Programme	140
Arka Kinari	158
Melodies In My Head	160
NooN	162
Parampara: From Generation to Generation	164
Reappropriation Riddims	170
The Song of Ceylon: Reverberations	174
 Liberty by SCOPE Cinemas	 176
Perera Elsewhere	178
 Festival Code of Conduct	 180
Visitor Information	181
Acknowledgements	182
Patrons & Friends	184
Partners	186
A Drummer's Song – Sarah Kazmi	188

RHYTHM ALLIANCES

Rhythm Alliances is an exercise of attunement to the varied dispositions of rhythm—energizing, contrasting, haunting, recurring, turbulent, and imagined. Far more than a static exhibition, it is a celebration of energies and experimental forms. Since experiencing rhythm-making is also an invitation for time-travel, the acts in this edition assemble a communal score of creation, resistance, and alliance-building. Involving over 50 artists and collectives, musicians, choreographers, filmmakers and cultural organizers, the festival programme will continue its pluriversal journey across freely accessible venues in Colombo.

The ninth edition of Colomboscope draws on a range of vocabularies embodying rhythms of remembrance, dissent, and renewal. From the noise of a global order where hyperconsumption and war are rife, how may sonic counter-currents transmit the ingredients of struggles today, make paradoxical realities audible, echo in the lifeways of migrant belonging, and resonate shared dreaming? Across live experiences and exhibited works we will also explore the role of listening in producing relationships of reciprocity and engage with the ways in which acoustic leakages and vocal atmospheres compose new public territories that refute borderlines, data harvesting, and oppressive systems.

The visual identity for Rhythm Alliances developed by FOLD Media Collective centres on a radiating waveform motif, evoking the pulse of a drumbeat, the ripples of vibration,

and the cyclical breath of oral tradition. Its dynamic, undulating form visually echoes the festival's approach toward rhythm as a force of connection, memory, and resistance. The graphic design distills rhythm into form—a minimal yet potent signal of energy, collectivity, and sonic transmission.

Inviting the frequencies and percussive knowledge from ritualistic drumming in Sri Lanka, Nyabinghi 'groundations' in Rastafari tradition to broader Asian cosmologies and Pan-African notions of world-making through vibrations upon the drum head. Drumming signals rupture, freedom and release; cosmic dramas of birth, clash and decline. The drum as a powerful communication tool was forbidden on the plantation, as Amiri Baraka reminds us when recounting histories of Black music. In multiple regions of Sri Lanka, healing rites, ceremonies, processions and exorcisms are performed through a primacy of drumming.

The drum is thereby presented as pulsating guardian and emissary, channelling complex beat structures and polyphonous environments, in use to ward off apparitions, devil spirits and to invoke divine forces and seasonal festivities. In Sinhalese cultures of the South, these rites and rituals are conducted by healers with experienced drummers and dancers to heal physical and psychological ailments as well as animate folk legend. The parai mela, mridangam, and thavil drumming traditions of Northern Sri Lanka propel

Festival Introduction | Edition Nine

communal communication and sonic knowledge building at sacred sites and temple festivals dating back to the Sangam period, connecting the island's living cultures to ancient Southern India.

Colomboscope holds inquiries such as, how do the reverberations of sound carry across generations? How may repressed and minor rhythms be revived and recalled? We attend to orature—citing Indigenous storytelling as modes of calling the world into being, pre-linguistic acts such as humming, the swell of rumour, revolutionary chants, incantations of exorcism, and the curse of a Yakshini queen scripted into the island's mythic tableau. In privileging the aural imaginary over master chronicles, expressivity carried from birth to the end of a life-cycle—lullaby to lament—auditory and choreographic acts have shaped the arc of communal existence.

Musical grammar has consistently elaborated on written language codes, through inventive approaches to notation, harmonics, and 'keeping time'. Artists' scores prompt modes of reading and hearing expansively to launch into improvisation as a charting of the unknown. Such sonority challenges technological scribes and the digital virtuosity of cloud servers. Instead, the differential tonalities, accents, and markings remain both intuitive and counter-intuitive—as forms of embodied knowing that rekindle lifelines, and creative capacity prone to rest, breakdowns, and dreaming.

In commencement, festival curator Hajra Haider Karrar draws inspiration from the 'song of the circling spirit' that stems from Nigerian-British poet and novelist Ben Okri's *Songs of Enchantment*. This evocative notion enables a clarity of vision beyond chaos toward new horizons, recognizing the importance of 're-dreaming' rhythms and trajectories that have the potential of charting alternative courses for the self and others. By reuniting human existence with the elements and beyond, this celebration of rhythms is a reassertion of interdependencies that enable being and becoming.

Following the steps of the ancestors, with the descendants in mind, sonic vocabularies manifest the world into being by acknowledging and naming it. Their reverberations function as social compasses to process the spectrum of emotions and the ever shifting social, political, and environmental conditions—a collective channelling of happiness and grief, trauma and triumph, longing and union. Across the planet, rhythm structures are conceived as offerings toward and in resonance with the elements—the sun, moon, seasons of harvest, rainfall and tidal currents. The dancing body produces alterity—a realm where stories are exchanged, rules are renewed, and we encounter one another momentarily, on a more equitable earth.

රිද්ම හවුල

රිද්ම හවුල යනු රිද්මයේ විවිධ ස්වභාවයන්ට කන් දීමේ අභ්‍යාසයකි. රිද්මය විටෙක පටයෙන් යුක්තය; පරස්පර විරෝධී ය. එය විටෙක අපට වෙළා ගනිමින්, කලහකාරී වෙමින්, අපි විටෙක මවා ගන්නා, යළි යළිත් නැගෙන්නකි. රිද්ම හවුල ප්‍රදර්ශනයක් ම නොවෙයි. එය ශක්තීන් හා පර්යේෂණාත්මක ආකෘති සැමරීමකි. රිද්මය නිපදවෙන හැටි අත්දැකීම යනු කාලය හරහා ගමන් කිරීමක් වන නිසා, මේ ප්‍රදර්ශනයේ කලාකෘති මගින් නිර්මාණකරණය, අරගල කිරීම, හා හවුල් ගොඩ නැගීම යන ඒවා එක්වුණු පොදු රිද්ම බණ්ඩයක් තනයි. කලාකරුවන්, කලා එකතු, සංගීතඥයින්, අංග රචකයන්, චිත්‍රපටකරුවන්, සහ සංස්කෘතික සංවිධායකයින් 50 අධික පිරිසක් එකට එකතු කරන මෙම උළෙලේ වැඩසටහන, කොළඹ පුරා පිහිටි නොම්ලේ ඇතුළු විය හැකි ස්ථාන කිහිපයක් අතරේ බහු විශ්වීය වාර්තාවක් මවයි.

අනුස්මරණය, විරුද්ධ මත ප්‍රකාශ කිරීම, සහ අලුත් කිරීම යන ඒවායේ රිද්මය කැටිකරගත් වාග්මාලා කලම්බස්කෝප්ති නවවන සංස්කරණයට යොදාගෙන ඇත. අධික පරිභෝජනය හා යුද්ධය රජයන ලොවක සේනාව මධ්‍යයේ, ශබ්දමය ප්‍රති-රළ වත්මන් අරගලවල රාවය රැගෙන යමින්, පරස්පර විරෝධී යකාර්ථවලට හඬක් දෙමින්, සංක්‍රමණික ජීවිත තුළ රැවි පිළිගැනීම දෙමින්, එකට එකතුව දකින හීන ප්‍රතිරාවය කරන්නේ කෙසේ ද? විවිධ ජීවන අත්දැකීම් හා සංදර්ශන කලාකෘති හරහා, අපි සවන්දීම තුළින් අන්‍යෝන්‍ය සබඳතා ගොඩ නැගෙන අයුරු ගවේෂණය කරන්නෙමු. තව ද, ධ්වනි කාන්දුවීම් හා වාග් අවකාශ එකට එකතුවී සීමා මායිම්, මහා පරිමාණ දත්ත එකතු කිරීම්, සහ පීඩාකාරී පද්ධති ප්‍රතික්ෂේප කරන අලුත් පොදු අවකාශ නිර්මාණ කරන අයුරු ද අපි ගවේෂණය කරන්නෙමු.

ෆෝල්ඩ් මිඩිසා මගින් ගොඩ නැගූ රිද්ම හවුල ප්‍රදර්ශනයේ දෘශ්‍යමය අනන්‍යතාවය, දීප්තිමත් ශබ්ද නරංග සළකුණක් වටා විහිදෙන අතර, ඉන්

බෙර මාත්‍රාවක ගැස්මත්, ප්‍රතිරාවක රැළි ගැසීමත්, වාග් සම්ප්‍රදායේ වක්‍රීය හුස්ම වැටීමත් මතක් කර දෙයි. මෙම උළෙලේ ප්‍රවේශය වන්නේ සබඳතා ඇති කරන, මතකය ගෙන එන, හා අරගලයට පණ දෙන බලයක් ලෙස රිද්මය දැකීමයි. ෆෝල්ඩ් මිඩිසා විසින් නිර්මාණය කෙරුණු එම සංකේතයෙහි විචිත්‍රවත්, රළ ගැසුණු රේඛා ඉහත ප්‍රවේශය මනාව දෘශ්‍යමය ලෙස කැටිකර ගනියි. රිද්මය ආකෘතියකට පෙරා ගත් එහි, ශක්තිය, සාමූහිකත්වය, හා ශබ්දමය චලනය සියුම්ව සංකේතවත් වෙයි.

මේ උළෙල, ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ ශාන්තිකර්ම බෙර වාදන සහ රස්තෆාරි සම්ප්‍රදායේ යාබත්ගැති 'ග්‍රවුන්ඩේෂන්' (පොළොව හරහා ජීවිතය සත්‍යකොට දැකීම) වාරිතුවල සිට, පුළුල් ආසියානු විශ්වීය සංගීතය සහ බෙර අස මත රැවිදෙන ගැස්මෙන් ලොවක් තැනීමේ පාර-අප්‍රිකානු අදහස් දක්වා රිද්මය ගවේෂණය කරයි. පුපුරා යෑම, නිදහස, හා මුදා හැරීම යන ඒවා බෙර වාදනය මගින් සංකේතවත් කෙරෙයි. එහි තුළ උපත, ගැටීම, හා ක්ෂය වීමේ විශ්වීය රංගනය ගැබ්ව ඇත. කළු ජාතික සංගීතයේ ඉතිහාස ගැන සිහිපත් කරන අමරි බර්කා පෙන්වා දෙන ලෙස, වතු තුළ බෙරය සන්නිවේදනයේ මෙවලමක් ලෙස භාවිතා කිරීම තහනම් කර තිබුණි. ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ බොහෝ ප්‍රදේශවල බෙර වාදනය මුලික කරගෙන සුවපත් කිරීමේ වාරිතුව, උත්සව, පෙරහැර, හා යක්ෂ ආත්ම පළවා හැරීමේ පිළිවෙත් සිදු කෙරෙයි.

එහෙයින් භූතාත්ම පළවා හැරීම සහ, දේව බලය හා උත්සව සමය රැගෙන ඒම සඳහා සංකීර්ණ මාත්‍රා හා බහුස්වන පරිසර හසුරුවන ආරක්ෂකයෙක් හා දූතයෙක් ලෙස බෙරය දකිනු ලැබෙයි. දකුණේ සිංහල සංස්කෘති තුළ ශාරීරික මෙන් ම මානසික ව්‍යාධි සුව කිරීමටත්, ජන පුරාවෘත්තවලට ජීවය දීමටත්, පුරුදු බෙර වාදකයින් හා නැටුවුවන් සමග යකායුරක් විසින් මෙවැනි වතාවත් හා ශාන්තිකර්ම සිදු කරයි. තව ද, දිවයිනේ ජීවී සංස්කෘති ඓතිහාසික දකුණු ඉන්දියාවට සම්බන්ධ කරමින්, උතුරු ශ්‍රී

උත්සව සංකල්පය

ලංකාවේ පරෙයි මේලා, (ම)රිදුන්ගම්, හා තවත් බෙර වාදන සම්ප්‍රදායවල්, සංගීත අවධිය දක්වා යන පූජනීය ස්ථාන හා කෝවිල් උත්සවවලදී ප්‍රජා අතර සන්නිවේදනය හා ශබ්දමය දැනුම ගොඩ නැගීම ඉදිරියට ගෙන යයි.

කලමිබස්කෝප් අසන ප්‍රශ්න කිහිපයක් වෙයි. ශබ්දයේ නින්නාදය පරම්පරා අතරේ ගමන් කරන්නේ කෙසේ ද? යටපත් කෙරුණු අප්‍රධාන රිද්මවලට යළි පණ දී ගෙන්වන්නේ කෙසේ ද? මෙහිදී අපේ අවධානය යොමු වන්නේ වාචික සාහිත්‍යයට ය. අප ජීවත් වන ලෝකය ගොඩ නැගීමට උදව් වන ආදිවාසී කතාන්දර කිමි, අකුරු කියවීමට පෙර භාවිත කරන හුමිටි තැබිම්, විකේන් ටික පැතිරෙන කටකතා, විජලවකාරී සටන් පාඨ, යක්ෂාත්ම පළවා හරින මැතිරිලි, හා දිවයිනේ මිත්‍යා ඉතිහාසයේ කෙටුණු යක්ෂ රාජීනකයෝ සාපය වැනි දෑ මෙහිදී ග්‍රහණය කෙරෙයි. මහා වංශකතාවලට වඩා පරිකල්පිතය ඇගයීමේදී ද, උපතේ සිට ජීවන වක්‍රයේ අවසානය තෙක්—දරු නැළවිල්ලේ සිට විශේෂ දුක්ගැනවිල්ල දක්වා—අප රැගෙන යන ප්‍රකාශනාත්මක බව ඇගයීමේදී ද, විවිධ ශ්‍රවණමය හා අංග රචනාත්මක කලාකෘති, යම් ප්‍රජාවක කොටසක් ලෙස මිනිසුන්ගේ ජීවිත ගලා යන මාර්ගය පෙන්වා දෙයි.

අංකනය, සුසංගත ස්වර සංයෝජනය, හා තාලය තැබීම සඳහා අලුත් ක්‍රම භාවිත කරමින්, සංගීතමය ව්‍යාකරණ නිතර ම ලිඛිත කේත යොදා ගෙන ඇත. කලාකරුවන්ගේ සංගීත බණ්ඩ මගින්, පෙර සුදුනමක් නොමැතිව තැනෙන කලාකෘති හරහා අප නොදන්නා ලොවක් තරණය කිරීමට උදව් වන විවිධ කියවීමේ හා ඇසීමේ ක්‍රම අපට ලබාදෙයි. එවැනි ශබ්ද මාලා මගින් තාක්ෂණික ලිවීමේ මෙවලම් හා ඩිජිටල් ක්ලවුඩ් සර්වර් පද්ධතිවල සදාචාරසම්පන්න බව අභියෝගයට ලක් කරයි. ඊට වෙනස් ලෙස, ප්‍රතිභාපූර්ණවූ මෙන් ම නොවූ විවිධ ස්වර, මාත්‍රා, හා සලකුණු කිරීම් සහජයෙන් එන දැනුම පෙන්වා දෙයි. තව ද, එම ආකෘති අපට මතක් කර දෙන්නේ

විවේකය සොයන, විටෙක කඩා වැටෙන, හා නිතර ම සිහින දකින නිර්මාණාකරුවන්ගේ ශක්‍යතාවයයි. මෙහි පටන් ගැන්ම ලෙස, උළෙලේ අතිරේකක හජීරා හයිදර් කරාර් නයිජීරියානු-බ්‍රිතාන්‍ය කවියෙකු හා නවකතාකරුවෙකු වන බෙන් ඔක්රිගේ ‘Songs Of Enchantment’ (1993) හි එන ‘හුමණය වන ආත්මයේ ගීතය’ යන සංකල්පයෙන් ආභාෂය ගෙන ඇත. මෙම සංකල්පය කලබලකාරීත්වයෙන් එහාට දෑස් යොමා අලුත් ක්ෂිතිපයක් දෙස බැලීමට ඉඩ සලස්වන අතර, තමාටත් අන් අයටත් වෙනස්වූ මාර්ග තනා ගැනීමට සහය වන රිද්ම හා සිද්ධි ගැන හීන බැලීමේ වැදගත්කම පෙන්වා දෙයි. ස්වභාව ධර්මයන් ඉන් ඔබ්බටත් ඇති දේ සමග මානව ජීවිතය යළි සම්බන්ධ කර, වත්මනෙහි හා අනාගතයේ පැවැත්ම සඳහා අවශ්‍ය අනෙක්‍ය සම්බන්ධතා යළි ඇති කිරීමට, මෙම රිද්මයේ සැමරුම බලාපොරොත්තු වෙයි.

මුතුන් මිත්තන්ගේ අභියෝග ම යමින්, පසු පරම්පරා ගැන ද මෙනෙහි කරමින්, ශබ්දමය වාග්මාලා මේ ලොව තනන්නේ එයට නමක් හා පැවැත්මක් ආරෝපණය කරමින් ය. විවිධාකාරයේ වූ හැඟීම් සහ නිතර ම වෙනස් වන සමාජයීය, දේශපාලනික, හා පාරිසරික තත්ත්වයන් වටහා ගැනීමට උදව් කරන මාළිමාවක් වත් ශබ්ද නින්නාදයන්, සතුව හා දුක, කම්පනය හා ජයග්‍රහණය, විශේෂය හා එක්වීම එකට එක්කරයි. රිද්ම ව්‍යුහයන් යහු ඉර, හඳ, වගා කන්නයන්, වැස්ස, හා වඩවිය බාදිය වැනි ස්වාභාවික අංග උදෙසා පිළිගනී, එම අංග හා බැඳුණු ඒවා ලෙස මේ පෘථිවිය පුරාවට ම දකිනු ලැබෙයි. නර්තනයේ යෙදෙන සිරුර වෙනස් වූ යතාර්ථයක් මවයි. එම අපක්ෂපාතී ලෝකය තුළ කතාන්දර හුවමාරු කෙරෙන අතර, නීති රීති අලුත් වී අපි එකිනෙකාට එක් මොහොතකට හවුල්වන්නෙමු.

தாளக் கூட்டு

தாளக்கூட்டு என்பது தாளத்தின் பல்வேறு தன்மைகளுக்கு இசைவாகச் செயல்படும் ஒரு பயிற்சியாகும்.- உற்சாகப்படுத்துதல்; மாறுபடுதல்; வேட்டையாடுதல்; மீண்டும் மீண்டும் வருதல்; கொந்தளித்துமுடைய கற்பனை செய்யப்பட்ட ஒன்றுமாகும். ஒரு நிலையான கண்காட்சியை விடவும் இது ஆற்றல்களினதும் சோதனை வடிவங்களினதும் கொண்டாட்டமாகும். தாள உருவாக்க அனுபவம் தொடங்கி ஒரு காலப் பயணத்திற்கான அழைப்பாகவும் இது இருப்பதால் படைத்தல், எதிர்ப்பு மற்றும் கூட்டணியை உருவாக்குதல் ஆகியவற்றின் சமூக பங்களிப்புடன் கூடிய மதிப்பெண்ணை இந்தப் பதிப்பில் உள்ள செயல்கள் ஒருங்கிணைக்கின்றன. ஐம்பதுக்கும் அதிகமான கலைஞர்கள், கூட்டு இசைக் கலைஞர்கள், நடன இயக்குநர்கள், திரைப்படத் தயாரிப்பாளர்கள், கலாசார அமைப்பாளர்களை உள்ளடக்கிய இந்த விழா நிகழ்ச்சி, கொழும்பில் சுதந்திரமாக அணுகக்கூடிய இடங்களில் அதன் பன்முகப் பயணத்தைத் தொடரும். கொலம்புகோப்பின் ஒன்பதாவது பதிப்பு, ஞாபகங்களின் தாளக்கட்டுகளை உருவகப்படுத்துதல்தொகுத்து வேறுபாடு, புதுப்பித்தல் ஆகியவற்றின் பல்வேறு சொற்களஞ்சியங்களை வரைகிறது. மிகை நுகர்வு மற்றும் போர் நிறைந்த உலகளாவிய ஒழுங்கின் இரைச்சலிலிருந்து, இன்றைய போராட்டங்களின் மூலக்கூறுகளை- ஒலி எதிர் மின்னோட்டங்கள் எவ்வாறு கடத்தக்கூடும் என்பது பற்றி பரிசோதிக்கிறது; முரண்பாடான யதார்த்தங்களைக் கேட்கக் கூடியதாக மாற்றுவது எப்படி? புலம்பெயர்ந்தோரின் வாழ்க்கை முறைகளில், பகிரப்பட்ட கனவுகளில் எவ்வாறு அவை எதிரொலிக்கின்றன.

நேரடியான வாழ்வனுபவங்கள் மற்றும் காட்சிப்படுத்தப்பட்ட படைப்புகள் முழுவதும்இ பரஸ்பர உறவுகளை உருவாக்குவதில் கேட்பதன் பங்கை ஆராய்கிறது, மேலும் எல்லைக் கோடுகள், தரவு சேகரிப்பு மற்றும் அடக்குமுறை அமைப்புகளை மறுக்கும் புதிய பொதுவான பிரதேசங்களை உருவாக்கும் ஒலிக் கசிவுகள் மற்றும் குரல் சூழல்களில் ஈடுபடுகிறது.

FOLD MEDIA உருவாக்கிய தாளக்கூட்டுக்கான காட்சி அடையாளம், ஒரு கதிர்வீச்சு அலை வடிவ மையக்கருத்தை அடிநாதமாகக் கொண்டது. இது ஒரு மேள தாளத்தின் துடிப்பு, அதிர்வுகளின் சிற்றலைகள் மற்றும் வாய்வழி மரபின் சுழற்சி சுவாசத்தைத் தூண்டுகிறது. அதன் மாறும், அலை அலையான வடிவம். இணைப்பு. நினைவகம் மற்றும் எதிர்ப்பின் சக்தியாக, தாளத்தை நேரக்கிய விழாவின் அணுகுமுறையைக் காட்சிரீதியாக எதிரொலிக்கிறது. வரைகலை வடிவமைப்பு தாளத்தை வடிவமாக வடிக்கிறது-ஆற்றல், கூட்டுத்தன்மை மற்றும் ஒலிப் பரிமாற்றத்தின் குறைந்தபட்ச ஆனால் சக்திவாய்ந்த சமிக்ஞையாக அது ஆகிறது.

இலங்கையில் சடங்குசார்ந்த மேளம் கொட்டுதலிருந்து அதிர்வெண்கள் மற்றும் தாள அறிவை அழைப்பதுடன், 'ரஸ்தாஃபாரி' பாரம்பரியத்தின் 'நியாயிங்கி' 'அடிப்படைகள்', மேளத்தின் முன்பக்க அதிர்வுகள் மூலம் உலகத்தை உருவாக்கும் பரந்த ஆசிய அண்டலியல் மற்றும் அகன்ற-ஆபிரிக்கக் கருத்துகள். பறை அறைதலின் இசை முறிவானது சுதந்திரம் மற்றும் விடுதலையைக் குறிக்கிறது; பிறப்பு, மோதல் மற்றும் வீழ்ச்சியின் அண்டலியல்

விழா அறிமுகம்

நாடகங்கள். கருப்பின இசையின் வரலாறுகளை விவரிக்கும்போது 'அமிரி பராகா' நமக்கு நினைவூட்டுவதுபோல, பெருந்தோட்டங்களிலும் சக்திவாய்ந்த தகவல் தொடர்புக் கருவியான பறை தடுக்கப்பட்டதாகிவிட்டது, இலங்கையின் பல பகுதிகளில் குணப்படுத்தும் சடங்குகள், விழாக்கள், ஊர்வலங்கள் மற்றும் பேயோட்டுதல் ஆகியவை பறை அறைதலுடாகச் செய்யப்படுகின்றன.

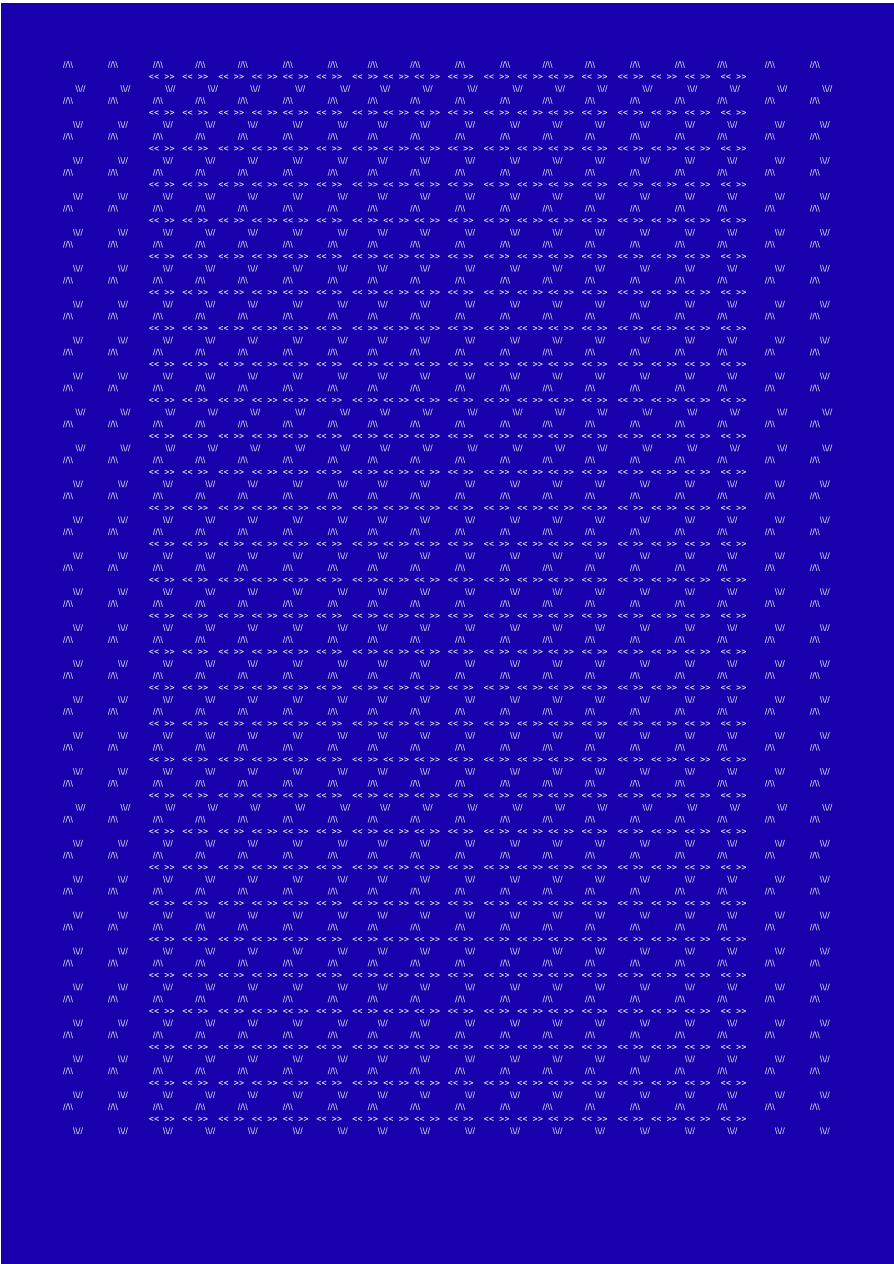
அதனால், பறையானது துடிப்பேற்றும் பாதுகாவலராகவும், தூதராகவும் தன்னை முன்வைக்கிறது. சிக்கலான தாள அமைப்புகள் மற்றும் பல்குரல் சூழல்களை வெளிப்படுத்துதல். பேய்கள். தீய ஆவிகளை விரட்டவும். தெய்வீக சக்திகள் மற்றும் பருவ கால திருவிழாக்களை அழைக்கவும் இவை பயன்படுத்தப்படுகிறது. தெற்கின் சிங்களக் கலாசாரங்களில் இச்சடங்குகள் மற்றும் சடங்கு முறைகள் அனுபவம் வாய்ந்த தாளவாத்தியகாரர்கள் மற்றும் நடனக் கலைஞர்களைக் கொண்ட குணப்படுத்துபவர்களால் நடத்தப்படுகின்றன. இது உடல் மற்றும் உளவியல் நோய்களைக் குணப்படுத்துவதோடு நாட்டுப்புறப் புராணக் கதைகளையும் உயிர்ப்பிக்கிறது. வட இலங்கையின் பறை மேளம், மிருதங்கம் மற்றும் தவில் வாத்திய மரபுகள் சங்க காலம் தொட்டு புனித தலங்களிலும், கோயில் திருவிழாக்களிலும் சமூகத் தொடர்பாடலையும், ஒலி அறிவையும் வளர்த்து. தீவின் வாழும் கலாசாரங்களை பழங்கால தென்னிந்தியாவோடு இணைக்கின்றன.

ஒலியின் எதிரொலிகள் எவ்வாறு தலைமுறைகளை ஊடறுத்து பரவுகின்றன? அடக்கப்பட்ட மற்றும் சிறிய தாளங்களை எவ்வாறு மீண்டும் உயிர்ப்பித்து நினைவு சுவரலாம் போன்ற விசாரணைகளை கொலம்போஸ்கோப் நடத்துகிறது. உலகை உருவாக்குவதற்கு அழைக்கும் முறைகளாக நாங்கள், வாய்வழி மேற்கோள்களாக அமைந்துள்ள உள்ளூர் கதை சொல்லல், ரீங்காரமிடல் வதந்திகளின் பெருக்கம். புரட்சிகர சுலோகங்கள். பேயோட்டும் மந்திரங்கள் மற்றும் தீவின் புராண அட்டவணையில் எழுதப்பட்ட இயக்கவின் ராணியின் சாபம் போன்ற முன்மொழிவுகளை மேற்கோள் காட்டும், பேச்சுத் திறன்களையும் நாங்கள் கவனிக்கிறோம். பெரும் வரலாற்று உரைகளுக்கு மேலாக செவிப்புலன் கற்பனைக்கு முன்னுரிமை அளிப்பதில் பிறப்பு முதல் வாழ்க்கை வட்டத்தின் இறுதிவரை கொண்டு செல்லப்படும் வெளிப்பாடு—தாலாட்டு முதல் ஒப்பாரி வரை—செவிவழி மற்றும் நடனச் செயற்பாடுகள் ஊடாக சமூக இருப்பின் பெருவளைவை வடிவமைக்கின்றன. இசை இலக்கணம், குறியீடு, இசை ஒத்திசைவு மற்றும் 'நேரத்தைக் கடைப்பிடித்தல்' போன்ற அணுகுமுறைகள் மூலம் எழுதப்பட்ட மொழி குறியீடுகளை தொடர்ந்து விரிவுபடுத்தியுள்ளது. கலைஞர்களின் மதிப்பெண்கள், தெரியாதவற்றின் விளக்கப்படமாகவும் மேலும் மேம்பட்டுச் செல்வதற்கான நுழைவாகவும் விரிவான வாசிப்பு மற்றும் கேட்கும் முறைகளைத் தூண்டுவனவாகவும் அமைகின்றன. இத்தகைய ஒலிப்பு தொழில்நுட்ப எழுத்தாளர்கள் மற்றும் கிளவுட் சர்வர்களின் டிஜிட்டல் திறமைக்கு

சவால் விடுகிறது. அதற்குப் பதிலாக, வேறுபட்ட தொனிகள், உச்சரிப்புகள் மற்றும் அடையாளங்கள் > உள்ளுணர்வு மற்றும் எதிர்-உள்ளுணர்வு ஆகிய இரண்டையும் கொண்டுள்ளன - உயிர்நாடிகளை மீண்டும் தூண்டும் மற்றும் படைப்பாற்றல் திறனை முடுக்க, முறிவுகள் மற்றும் கனவு காணும் வாய்ப்புள்ள வழிமுறைகளாக அவற்றை அறிந்துகொள்ள முனைகிறது. தொடக்கத்தில் விழாக் கண்காணிப்பாளர் ஹஜ்ரா ஹைதர் கர்ரார் நைஜீரிய-பிரிட்டிஷ் கவிஞரும் நாவலாசிரியருமான பென் ஓக்ரியின் 'Songs of Enchantment' (1993) இலிருந்து உருவாகும் 'Song of the Circling Spirit' இருந்து உத்வேகம் பெறுகிறார். இந்த தூண்டுதல் கருத்துக் குழப்பத்திற்கு அப்பால் புதிய எல்லைகளை நோக்கிய பார்வையின் தெளிவை செயல்படுத்துகிறது. சுயத்திற்கும் மற்றவர்களுக்கும் மாற்றுப் படிப்புகளைப் பட்டியலிடும் திறனைக் கொண்ட 'மறு-கனவு' தாளங்கள் மற்றும் பாதைகளின் முக்கியத்துவத்தைப் புதுமையாக அங்கீகரிக்கிறது. மனித இருப்பை மூலக்கூறுகளுடனும் அதற்கு அப்பாலும் மீண்டும் இணைப்பதன் மூலம் இத்தகைய தாளங்களின் கொண்டாட்டம் இருத்தல் மற்றும் மாறுதலைச் செயல்படுத்தும் ஒன்றுக்கொன்று சார்ந்திருப்புகளின் மறு உறுதிப்படுத்தலாகும்.

மூதாதையர்களின் அடிச்சுவடுகளைப் பின்பற்றி, சந்ததியினரை மனதில் கொண்டு, ஒலிச் சொற்களஞ்சியமானது உலகத்தை, அதன் இருப்பை வெளிப்படுத்துகிறது. அதை ஒப்புக்கொண்டு பெயரிடுகிறது. அவற்றின் எதிரொலிகள் உணர்ச்சிகளின் நிறமாலையையும் எப்போதும் மாறிவரும் சமூகஇ அரசியல் மற்றும் சுற்றுச்சூழல்

நிலைமைகளையும் செயலாக்க சமூக திசைகாட்டிகளாகச் செயல்படுகின்றன - மகிழ்ச்சி மற்றும் துக்கம், அதிர்ச்சி மற்றும் வெற்றி, ஏக்கம் மற்றும் ஒன்றிதல் ஆகியவற்றின் கூட்டு வழித்தடமாகின்றன. கோள்கள் முழுவதும். தாளக் கட்டமைப்புகள் சூரியன், சந்திரன், அறுவடைப் பருவங்கள், மழை மற்றும் அலை நீரோட்டங்கள் போன்ற சூறுகளை நோக்கியும் அவற்றுடன் எதிரொலிப்பதாகவும் கருதப்படுகின்றன. உடல் மாற்றத்தை உருவாக்குகிறது - கதைகள் பரிமாறிக்கொள்ளப்படும்இ விதிகள் புதுப்பிக்கப்படும். மேலும் நாம் ஒருவரையொருவர் ஒரு கணம்இ மிகவும் சமமான பூமியில் சந்திக்கும் ஒரு உலகம்.



Vaimaila Urale

Chaos Theory

Dye sublimation print on fabric

2026

Song of the Circling Spirit

Embodying rhythms of remembrance, resistance, and renewal

Breathing... Whirling...

The movement of the wind through the body and spiralling around it, charting somatic and spiritual rhythms that sustain life. The animation of mind and matter, and of the world that holds them—the physical, metaphorical, and mythological—unfolds through these flows. Rhythms inherent, intersecting, renewed, and contrived enable the perception and navigation of the pluriverse through visible, invisible, and hidden patterns, frequencies, and movements. The ninth edition of *Colomboscope* is an exercise of attunement to the varied dispositions of rhythm that are recognized as movement; obscured, uncharted, recurring, and imagined—as time, a collapse of temporalities, as forms of resistance, hunger, repetition, and as invocations. Activated through multifarious formats by practitioners, the festival sonically and visually traverses the many realms of

interwoven, contrasting, and resonating rhythms brought into circulation for this edition. 'Song of the circling spirit' stems from the Nigerian-British poet and novelist, Ben Okri's literary work *Songs of Enchantment*, where it enables a clarity of vision beyond chaos to new horizons, recognizing the importance of 're-dreaming' rhythms and trajectories that have the potential of charting alternative courses for the self and the collective. By rekindling the polyrhythms and reuniting human existence with the elements and beyond, the celebration of rhythms in this edition is a reassertion of interdependencies that enable being and becoming.

The sonic transmission of narratives and histories encompasses the texture of language, the firmness and elasticity of terrain, the whispers of the wind, the smell of rain, and the taste of grain. These oral transmissions across time, space, and generations enable

Curatorial Essay by Hajra Haider Karrar

a grounding of self and surroundings, an affiliation beyond kin to the land, sea, and sand, an anchor that binds yet does not insist on proximity. These oral traditions train in the navigation of the world that simultaneously equips and empowers with the poetic episteme embedded in between the rhythm of verses, ragas, gestures, and movements. This knowledge enables and provides vocabulary for new rhythms of resistance, opacity, and subversion against imposed and dominating patterns of systemic oppressions and violence that enforce a curtailment of movement and erase and discontinue the flow of embodied and situated knowledge.

Following the steps of the ancestors with the descendants in mind, these sonic rhythms manifest the world into being by acknowledging and naming it. Their reverberations function as social compasses to process the spectrum of emotions and the ever shifting social, political, and environmental conditions—a collective channeling of happiness and grief, trauma and triumph, longing and union, as persuasion and charming of the elements; the sun, moon, rain and the sea, or as honouring and summoning the ancestors and spirits in shared temporal realms of dream rituals. These rhythms embedded in the everyday,

are portals that can either rotate in a circular motion, that can revolve around the self and the material world or enable a transcendence across the spiritual realms of nafs / consciousness, providing a clarity where all veils dissolve between visible and invisible, living and the dead and those living but unseen and forgotten, defying the containment of linear time and space. “Experiential librarians store understandings and perspectives inside their bodies. They contemplate on and digest the knowledge that is found in observation, practice, and communal rituals. They sing, drum, and dance the codified and sequenced rhythms of the ancestors and provide opportunities for others to experience and learn,” states Yvonne Daniel.¹ The first sensorium to be developed in a fetus is the auditory through low frequency sound exposure emerging from the mother and the outside world softened and protected by the amniotic fluid. These first encounters with sound are an attunement and preparation for entering a new abode where the being is introduced to circadian rhythms, lullabies, and laments, in the process of shaping the architecture of being together with other life forms and forces. In these cycles of renewals, there is a consistent rehearsal of remaking the world, naming and renaming the rhythmic epistemes previously created

and carried forth. Nurturing rhythms aligned with matrilineal trajectories, holding, hosting the generation before, after, and within, instructing how to hold breath and resume it, to speak loudest within the silences, to verbalize and visualize, shape and form, obscure and preserve, rediscover and engage—how to regain rhythm when interrupted or discontinued. While rehearsing belonging with her mother in a foreign place, Seni Seneviratne captures a moment in this excerpt from her poem, 'The Weight of the World'.²

*She was my due north.
Her right hand set west, mine tracing the east,
we closed the distance,
calmed the wayward weight,
bringing order to the billowing world.*

Similar are the transpositions of sound, wind, water, and the sand—whispering, hissing, moving, caressing, capturing, swaying, and carrying across geographies from the east to the west, shaping ergs, layering and diversifying the waterbed sediments, preserving and protecting reserves, to make meaning of the world. Amidst war and active erasures of communities the silences vibrate—in the pauses between sentences, hesitations in between words uttered—carried north with the 'Vadakku Kaatru' and south with 'Therkku Kaatru'—becoming dispersed sites of resistance and rebellion. It is the potentiality of becoming within silence that relays strength to these pregnant pauses. Where language falls short, it is the rendition of the sound evoked through the encounter of the hand and

the drum, where the hypnotic beat gains momentum to reach a crescendo—heard and revered by those attuned to the silences. "Echo is the name's inscription in the air,"³ shares Mahmoud Darvish in his book *Absent Presence*. Here, the tunes of Afrolankan baila are testament to the resilience of the community, recentering and preserving it against dissolution.

How do the reverberations of sound carry across generations? How can the syncopated rhythms be revived and recalled? Citing sound is a gesture of call and response where each reenactment is a new gesture, a remaking, repetition, a new utterance honouring those across time. The act of humming is one such instance, it is an invocation of the time past or a formation for the future. A soft sound emerging from the back of the throat with closed lips in tunes that evoke a longing—a recollection, re-mem-bering of a time, people, and moment, or becomes a tune of rebellion and protest when words are unheard or prohibited, creating a stance, loudly expressing the pain and suffering indicating the ebbing tolerance and endurance. That may erupt in a chant; a repetition, a mantra, whether in protest or prayer, multiplied within one voice or a collection of voices, manifesting truths and realities that continue to be denied. Humming and chanting are initiations into complex melodic and rhythm forms and schemes of resistance and interplay with movement. Amongst these different formations of sound by the tongue and the body is also their assertion of agency that often denies assimilation and adoption of certain sounds and movements.

Rhythm Alliances brings together rhythmical perspectives that visibilize sound through scores and notations, experienced beneath the surface of the earth, in the celestial sphere, or the traumas trapped and unpronounced at the back of the throat. It recalls and pays homage to the winds that become agents of change, opacity, restoration, and preservation. According to Paulo Freire, for humanity to be sustained and recentered, it is important to consistently rename the world.⁴ This exercise of renaming is the song of the circling spirit that recognizes the cyclicity and continuity of time, where the evolving rhythms defy, renew, and rename.

1. Yvonne Daniel, "Rhythmic Remembrances" in *Rhythms of the Afro Atlantic World: Rituals and Remembrances*, ed. by Mamadou Diouf and Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo (University of Michigan, 2010), 82.

2. Seni Seneviratne, "The Weight of the World," in *Unknown Soldier* (Peep Tree Press, 2019).

3. Mahmoud Darwish, *Absent Presence*, (Hesperus Press Limited, 2010) 120.

4. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (Penguin Classics, 2017) 61.

Barefoot Gallery

Charwei Tsai
Haseeb Ahmed
Mekh Limbu
Pinaree Sanpitak
Raven Chacon
Saadia Mirza
Zarina Muhammad

Cosmological Recitations

A threshold between enclosed and open fluid space, this exhibition venue lends itself to performative gestures and ritual entryways that connect the exhibition to public gatherings, encouraging both focused and collective engagement. We meet here amidst lively connections between weaving, scoring music, and acts of recitation. Projects that foreground Indigenous and rooted practices from cinematic storytelling to textile and organic materiality for “drafting” story worlds. Artists use sacred verse in their drawings, explore book making and digital techniques, as well as archive informal ways of remembrance. Territorial formations and collapses are made tangible through a pairing of sonic frequencies with seismic recordings highlighting climate devastations. In addition to observing connections between the kinetics of monsoon cycles and management of windflow, the rooftop becomes a space of mechanical activation. Together these artists plot continuity between human and more-than-human bodies and create a sensorial theatre of objects where spiritual and communal knowledge gain mobility.





RHYTHM ALLIANCES

EXHIBITION VENUE

Charwei Tsai



Charwei Tsai's artistic journey explores cosmological and spiritual philosophies of East Asia, human-earth relations, and diverse craft heritage. Her works are often ephemeral and participatory in nature, inviting transformative engagements with sculpture, found objects like shells, scent experiences, paintings, and artist books. The artist was attracted to Buddhist scriptures from a young age and produced numerous iterations of the Heart Sutra as a way of connecting spiritual pathways across nature and culture. In conversation with fellow artist Heman Chong, she notes, "(...) I started to learn about Tibetan Buddhism mainly through the religious thangka paintings, sand mandalas, books, and teachings by some learned teachers, including the Dalai Lama."

Tsai often encodes her drawings with sacred Tibetan and Chinese sutras emphasizing values of impermanence, emptiness (anatta), circular time, and unity inscribed by hand in ink. The surface often includes mineral and botanical pigments such as malachite, cinnabar, azurite, and amphibole,

creating organic tableaus which reflect ancient traditions of image composition such as in Buddhist caves of Dunhuang where the tantric tradition gained recognition. In her new canvases, Tsai continues to explore principles of Tantric Buddhism and feminine energy of dakinis while interlacing her recent experiences at sites of pilgrimage and forest hermitages such as Ritigala in Central Sri Lanka.

In 2005, Tsai founded the curatorial journal *Lovely Daze* inviting artists' writings, poetry, and visual assemblages. A selection of issues are presented at Colomboscope along with an artist's book, *A Pilgrimage Through Light & Spells* (2012) which presents a short story in meditation form and black and white photographic renditions of previous works such as 'Sky Mantra'.

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
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and the Maldives, Alliance Française de Colombo*



Charwei Tsai
Five Sky Dancers
 Drawings with natural pigment extracts
 from cinnabar, azurite, malachite, orpiment,
 amphibole and ink on rice paper
 Collection of Live Forever Foundation, Taiwan
 2021

Haseeb Ahmed



Haseeb Ahmed works at the confluence of art, science, mythology, and crafting objects, installations, and moving image works that trace the invisible motions of natural phenomena: wind and water. Over the past decade, his practice has evolved into a meditation on fluid dynamics, charting new readings on how air movement and water currents carry with them sediments of history, labour, and imagination. Moving between the planetary and the personal, Ahmed's work listens to the atmospheric as archive, revealing how the forces that shape climate also shape power hierarchies.

For *Rhythm Alliances*, he reimagines the colonial *punkhawalla* fan as a participatory, site-specific installation engaging with coastal winds. Drawing on the entanglements that simultaneously control nature and human that divided the 'fanned' from the 'fanning', the fan returns here as an instrument of shared agency, animated by an automated *aeoliphone*, a musical device that translates wind into sound and will simultaneously produce it as well. Fabric and wood, reminiscent of traditional manual wind-catching structures, become vessels for breath, rhythm, and exchange.

The installation links ancient trade winds and colonial sea routes to contemporary energy politics. Developed with research support from architectural historian Pamudu Tennakoon, the project draws on Colombo's architectures of airflow and memory. Ahmed's work restores the wind's intimacy, bringing planetary phenomena to the scale of the body, inviting us to feel the air not merely as movement, but as a living history of connection and resistance.

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026

Haseeb Ahmed
Vanquish the Void!

Site-specific installation with weather station,
musical score by Heavy Color (Ben Cohen and Sam
Woldenberg), electronics, custom software, wood,
plastic, urethane foam and fabric
Installation view at the FRONT Triennial of Art
2022



Mekh Limbu



Mekh Limbu is an artist based in Kathmandu originally from Dhankuta. Belonging to the Adibasi-Janajati Yakthung (Limbu) community, his work addresses the geopolitical forces that stretch and shape Indigeneity. His inquiry and use of archival matter within his works marks a personal, as well as political, journey into the intergenerational transfer of language, ritual, and memory.

Limbu's work *Chotlung: traversing spirits, redemptive songs* (2025) at Colomboscope explores whether spaces marked by rupture and detachment can become fertile ground for reclaiming ancestral wisdom—not in spite of fracture but through it. In the Yakthung language, Chotlung is a polysemantic concept used to describe sites of profound sanctity. This work asks, when such geographies are fractured by force, can ancestral wisdom offer grounds for the reclamation of sovereignty? It centres weaving, practised by generations of Yakthung women, as a language of memory and revolt, and as an invocation of the grandmother spirit, Yuma. Extending into Mukkumlung, a sacred Yakthung

site and origin place of weaving, and the broader Imbiri Yangthangwa (Tamor river) region in present-day eastern Nepal, it also confronts ongoing threats from state-backed infrastructural incursions, including hydropower dams and a proposed cable car project. These interventions have disrupted local microclimates, triggered landslides, and begun drying up vital water sources, placing communities at risk of displacement. The textile pieces, handwoven by the artist, have previously been carried in demonstrations and also used in site-specific acts of protest against these developments. This interweave of film and thread forms hybrid layers that simultaneously hold continuity, loss, and regeneration.

– Priyankar Chand

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope 2026 and Ghost 2568, with the support of the Experimenter Generator Co-operative Art Production Fund, ArTree Nepal, Kalā Kulo, Yakthung Cho, and Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka

Mekh Limbu
Chotlung: traversing spirits, redemptive songs
Single-channel video with textile installation
2025





NO CABLE CAR
NO HYDRO
POWER
ON INDIGENOUS
BARRED LAND



CHD-LING

GRANDMOTHER
SPIRITS

GRANDMOTHER
SPIRITS

AND BACK
NO KOSHI

CABLE CARS,
HYDROPOWER
PROJECTS
IN INDIGENOUS
SACRED LAND

STAYS
WINTY

MY

Pinaree Sanpitak



Over the past four decades, Pinaree Sanpitak has centered her artistic practice on the female body, exploring it as an embodiment of personal, collective, and spiritual experience. Her sustained engagement with the body's form and texture has evolved into a distinct visual and sculptural vocabulary that allows for expanded readings of the political and the sacred while questioning entrenched social perceptions. Abstracting the body as a vessel manifested through breasts, eggs, and stupas, Sanpitak traverses the sensorial and the transcendental, the intimate and the universal, invoking gestures of nourishment, care, and transformation. Recognized as one of Thailand's most significant contemporary artists, Sanpitak positions the female form as a site of knowledge, perception, and renewal.

Sanpitak's multidisciplinary practice spans painting, sculpture, installation, performance, and participatory works. Artisanal vocabularies, food cultures, and rootedness recur throughout her sensorial approach, expressed through a deep material engagement. From silk and glass to mulberry paper, she uses tactile substances to meditate

on the body as a repository of offerings and embodied knowledge, continually reinventing the languages of touch, hospitality, and perception.

The five works from the *Balancing Act* series presented at Rhythm Alliances continue her inquiry into equilibrium and embodiment. Swaying with quiet rhythm, these gently rocking kinetic sculptures set atop platforms combine found household utensils and crafted vessels with hand-torn stacks of mulberry paper shaped into her signature, breast stupa, "a melding of the woman's breast with a Buddhist shrine." Drawing from the domestic and devotional, these works transform everyday materials into contemplative forms of physical and spiritual sustenance. Through these delicate movements, Sanpitak invites viewers to attend to these reverberations of care and stillness, to sense the body not merely as form, but as a living, resonant field of balance between self, world, and spirit.

Supported by Ames Yavuz



Pinaree Sanpitak
Balancing Act 14
 Mulberry paper, needle,
 bamboo basket, metal, motor
 2023
 Image courtesy of the artist
 and Ames Yavuz



Pinaree Sanpitak
Balancing Act 5
 Glass, mulberry paper, needle,
 metal, motor
 2023
 Image courtesy of the artist
 and Ames Yavuz

Raven Chacon



Raven Chacon, an Indigenous Diné artist, composer and performer, has developed an expansive lexicon of graphic notation, scores, videos, sculptures, and performances. Chacon was a member of the Native American interdisciplinary arts collective Postcommodity. Through his solo practice, Chacon has released over 80 compositions, becoming the first Native American to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music for his piece *Voiceless Mass*. Engaging imperial histories of land, cultural erasure, and settler colonialism particularly in the United States, the artist conceives boundary-crossing works across music, spatial geography, and collaboration. Often drawing out found sounds and natural acoustics, he connects Diné (Navajo) worldviews and relationship models with Western classical, avant-garde, and experimental music traditions.

At Colomboscope, four of Chacon's scores *Whistle Quartet* (2001), *Whisper Trio* (2008), *For Zitkála-Šá* (2017-2020), and *...lahgo adil'i dine doo yeehosinilgii yidaaghi* (2004) will be on view as well as performed by Sri Lankan musicians and enlivened by audiences. These scores incorporate Indigenous symbols and Navajo titles, often without conventional music instructions, placing the option—

or burden—of interpretation in the hands of the performers, inviting reflection on how assumptions and contexts shape the resulting acoustic narrative.

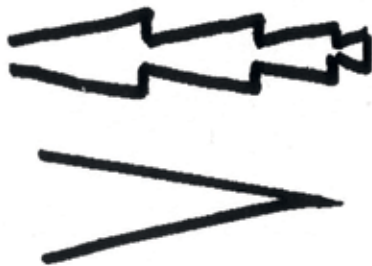
Whistle Quartet replicates the passing of knowledge through song by an elder or leader down to a new soul, embracing the act of becoming part of a greater unity. *Whisper Trio* is a learning piece for a trio of performers, whispering a poem in an endangered native language.

For Zitkála-Šá is a series of twelve graphic scores dedicated to contemporary American Indian, First Nations, and Mestiza women working in music performance, composition, and sound art. The scores function as both transcriptive portraits of these contemporary Indigenous women artists and the ways they navigate the twenty-first century.

lahgo adil'i dine doo yeehosinilgii yidaaghi takes inspiration from Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise*, but even more so from Navajo and Pueblo iconographies, particularly ancient petroglyphs carved into volcanic rock on the west side of Albuquerque.

Raven Chacon
For Zitkála-Šá (For Carmina Escobar)
Score/performance
2019





Raven Chacon

...lahgo adil'i dine doo yeehosinilgii yidaaghi

Score/ Music composition/Performance

2004

Image courtesy of the artist



Saadia Mirza



Trained in architecture and anthropology, Sadia Mirza employs listening, seeing, and sensing as creative strategies for perceiving environmental transformation. Her research-based practice maps critical cartographies of land shaped by war and climate crises, offering counter-readings of data often mobilized for control, surveillance, and occupation. From Afghanistan to Switzerland, she traces the vibrations of shifting terrains, listens to glaciers, and maps murmurs between land, sky, and ocean floor—where sensing becomes both an aesthetic and political act. Mirza reimagines environmental perception as rhythm, resonance, and relation, articulated through filmmaking, immersive sound, cartography, and digital media. Working across anthropology, art, and science, her practice proposes methods for navigating the frequencies of change and for safeguarding and renewal of fragile terrains.

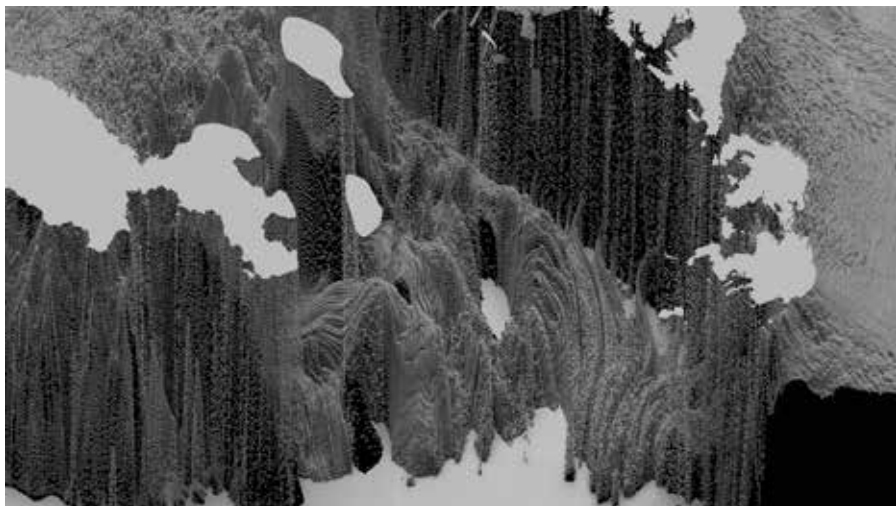
The new iteration of *A Phenomenology of Iceberg Collisions* (2024) presented at Colomboscope, is a cinematic sound and video installation reconstructing the rupture of the B15, the world's largest recorded iceberg. Drawing on data gathered by glaciologists and

geophysicists at the Polar Geospatial Center, Mirza compresses two years of seismic recordings into a ten-minute sensory encounter. Radar imagery of the ice sheet becomes a trembling visual field, synchronized with deep sonic frequencies that render the earth's subterranean movements—its fractures, slides, and shears—audible, visible, and tangible. These resonances collapse temporal and spatial distances, revealing the continuity between past ruptures and imminent futures. Through these transmissions across time, space, and geography, the work grounds the audience in a shared sensing of the world, inviting collective reimagining.

This work was produced in conversation with geophysicists Douglas MacAyeal, Julien Chaput, and Rick Aster. A part of the sound mixing has been done by sound artist Antoni Raijekov.

The B15 Iceberg Score is based on the seismological data.

Data: Douglas MacAyeal, Notation: Jessica Feldman, Transcript: Saadia Mirza



Saadia Mirza

Stills from A Phenomenology of Iceberg Collisions

Multi-channel audio and video

2025

First iteration commissioned
by the 15th Gwangju Biennale
and sponsored by the Canadian Council
of the Arts and the Institut Française.

Zarina Muhammad



Zarina Muhammad reimagines Southeast Asia's entangled histories through ritual, performance, and text. An artist, educator, and researcher from Singapore, she works across installation, sound, moving image, and participatory practice. Engaging with myth-making and spectral archives, she questions how colonial, ethnographic, and oral narratives shape our understandings of the otherworldly, the ecological, and the ancestral. Her long-term inquiry considers Southeast Asia's relationship to ritual magic, environmental knowledge, and the immaterial, seeking new ways to listen to worlds that resist legibility.

Her project, *Observing Omens Drawn by Lightning* (2025), unfolds as a multi-sited ritual constellation across Kochi, Colombo, and Singapore—three historically resonant port cities bound by oceanic routes and shared cosmologies. Rooted in the divinatory practice of *ceraunoscopy*, reading omens from thunder and lightning, the work traces how elemental signs, maritime histories, and ancestral memories shape collective sensoria and spiritual resilience.

At Colomboscope, the project manifests through a site-specific installation and participatory performance, responding to the city's coastal rituals and port histories, evoking the multiple realms of earth, sky, and sea through local species such as the golden jackal, kingfisher, and parrotfish. Sound, scent, sculptural objects, and performative gestures converge in a charged sanctuary of listening and transformation activated through collaborations with Ambalangoda mask-maker L.A.R. Nandana and conceives a live offering with performers on-site.

Performance collaborators include Hanaa Cassim, Malith Upendra, Sarita Abeyesundere, and Sneha Deshapriya

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026
with the support of National Arts Council
Singapore (NAC)*

Zarina Muhammad

Ikut Arus (Follow the Current)

Performance in collaboration with Orang Laut SG
presented as part of the Singapore Writers' Festival
2024



Colpetty Town House

Aboothahir Al Wajahath
Basma Al Sharif
Chamindika Abeysinghe
Dinar Sultana
Imaad Majeed
Jegatheeswaran Keshavan
Josèfa Ntjam
Jovita Alvares
Mahesha Kariyapperuma
KMRU
P. Ahilan
Sabeen Omar
Sarah Kazmi
Tashyana Handy and Sakina Aliakbar

Frequencies of Passage

This three-storey repurposed townhouse on Duplication Road used to be a multi-generational home a decade ago. For Rhythm Alliances, this is the largest exhibition venue of the festival. Invoking relationalities and remembrance to nearby and distant lands and to ancestors, the artists generate immersive installations for gaming, listening, and reading. The sonic, cinematic, and material experiments evoke a multitude of emotions ranging from grief, love, rapture, nostalgia, and the devastation of losing access to home and belonging through colonial erasure and civic divides. Contemplations on movement combine the domestic and geopolitical, through archival photographs, ephemera, field recordings and memoirs that highlight commercial trade, exile routes, and mangrove ecologies. Reflections on manual labour and land testimonies from Sri Lanka's handloom and plantation sectors are depicted in new creative projects. Traces of language inheritances and matrilineal heritage are crafted to flow with stories of migration. We are surrounded by explorations of birth, play, friendship, womanhood, and ceremonial lives of percussion. Traversing plural pasts and consciously mapping the now, these artistic encounters generate critical registers that revive, recontextualize, and seed alternative futures.





RHYTHM ALLIANCES

EXHIBITION VENUE

Aboothahir Al Wajahath

Handloom weaving has a longstanding and intergenerationally sustained legacy in different communities of Sri Lanka. It is a craft involving ancestral knowledge and expertise, as textile designers, artisans, and artists have worked together over decades to form a living heritage of pattern, colour, and form. Wajahath remembers growing up in the town of Maruthamunai, Ampara district, “playing around the handloom machines, amidst the rhythmic clatter of the handloom.”

As an artist with first-hand experiences spanning the beginning and end of handloom production cycles through his family’s textile factory, Wajahath’s practice not only reflects on the aesthetics of handloom, but also comments on the laborious processes, design innovations, and chemical impact of the industry as the fabric has become more commodified and mass produced today. His practice involves multiple media, such as drawing, painting, and installation, deploying found objects such as parts of fly shuttles and yarn spindles that come together to tell stories of weaving.

At Colomboscope, Wajahath connects these legacies of textile labour with embodied vocabularies of handloom weaving and rhythm keeping. His project *Naada* (2025) presents the unique handloom design vocabularies of his family, as opposed to mere hyper-commercial mass production. The loom’s sonic and gestural repetition by weavers is accompanied by leads to occupational health problems, with continuous sitting and exposure to toxic pigments and dust causing respiratory illnesses and impaired vision.

The emaciated sore-ridden feet of the weaver embody this labour against the backdrop of colourful handloom pieces on the same surface. Wajahath’s work speaks to the future of the handloom and garment industries, celebrating cultural heritage while questioning their impact on human labour.

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka*

Aboothahir al Wajahath
Spindle Stories III

Acrylic, handloom fabric, thread, and wood
2025

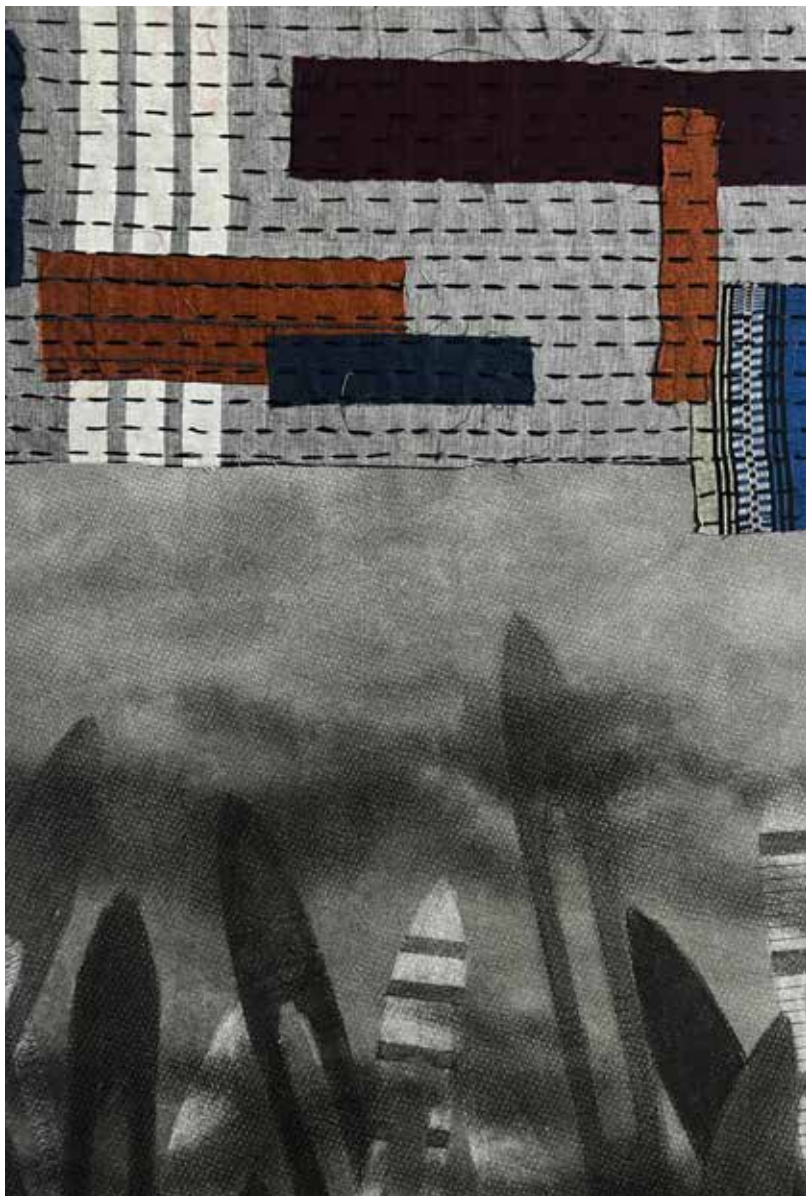




Aboothahir al Wajahath

Spindle Stories I

Acrylic, handloom fabric, thread, and wood
2025



Aboothahir al Wajahath
Woven Wonders II
Charcoal, handloom fabric, and thread
on paper
2025

Basma Al Sharif



Working across experimental film and installation, Basma Al Sharif is a Palestinian artist whose practice employs satire and poetry to construct alternative readings of dominant political histories, countering them with lived experience. Her work has evolved through nomadic movements across the Middle East, Europe, and North America, shaped by research, observation, and collective accounts of the cyclical nature of political conflict. She creates immersive environments that confront the persistence of colonial legacies and the borders that continue to be imposed by them.

a *Philistine* (2019–2023) is a theatrical installation characteristic of Al Sharif's practice, unfolding around the reading of a fictional novella that invites a participatory experience. Set within a communal seating arrangement, the installation features banner-like colour prints of sites from former Yugoslavia suspended from the ceiling and smaller black and white archival images of Egypt and Palestine from the Library of Congress along the walls. Serving as annotations to the novella's different acts that are divided across genres of History, Fantasy, and Erotica, these images echo the protagonist Loza's reverse journey through time, from

present-day Lebanon to 1935 Palestine, ending in (16th–11th century B.C.E) New Kingdom (Egypt). By retracing historical train routes once linking Haifa, Beirut, and Tripoli, the work reimagines borderless, permeable geographies, reclaiming lost routes as sites of memory and reimagining desire. Presented in Arabic, French, and English, a *Philistine* explores translation as both bridge and fracture, a metaphor for identity itself. The novella, readable only within the installation, invites slow, collective engagement that resists consumption and insists on presence. Through it, the artist continues her inquiry into time, rhythm, and resistance, transforming history into a space for re-enchantment and imagining otherwise.

Basma al Sharif

Semi-Nomadic Debt-Ridden Bedouins

Artist's book

2025

Image courtesy of Basma al Sharif and

Imane Farès, Paris

Photo Credits: Tadzio



Basma al Sharif
The Library of Congress
(Shore of the Dead Sea)
 Diptych pigment print on Hahnemühl photo rag
 2019
 Image courtesy of Basma al Sharif
 and Imane Farès, Paris
 Photo Credits: Tadzio



Chamindika Abeyasinghe

Dystopian, fantastical yet informed by locally inflected social insights and cultural atmospheres, Chamindika Abeyasinghe's practice has evolved a distinct style in 2D and 3D animation, with a sustained interest in soundscape building. In a newly commissioned work for Colomboscope, Abeyasinghe launches his pixel art video game *Taala Village* (2024-25), which translates to 'Village of Rhythms'. From the immersive world of gaming at hand, the artist retreats to proto-design ideas of early game building with minimal pixels. His characters are mobilized through Sri Lankan music instruments and sonic layering. Visitors are invited to venture into a virtual island where echoes, whispers, chimes, and vibrations accompany each action sequence. There, a speculative community, reflective of Sri Lanka's communal lives, worships fire alongside practising unique rituals, legends, and folklore.

Tones emerge from the thalampata, the first instrument used to practice simple sequences of the traditional Kandyan, Sabaragamu, and Southern dance forms in Sri Lanka. Then, the player encounters more sounds created by drums and conch shells, among others. Given his previous animated works that include a music video, this interactive project communicates where music production meets with folklore, ceremonial codes and vernacular architectures such as kovils, Buddhist temples, and village habitats. *Taala Village* exemplifies Abeyasinghe's practice of developing video gaming as a wayfinding technique in cultural storytelling.

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.

Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka

Chamindika Abeyasinghe

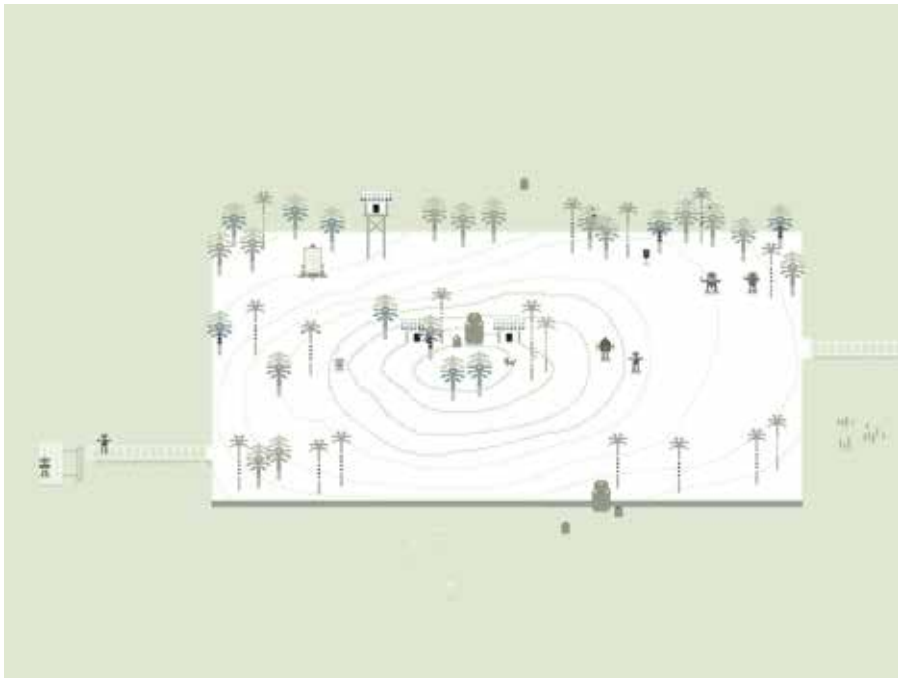
The first island

Pixel art still from video game *Taala Village*

2025



Chamindika Abeysinghe
The Yak bere player
Pixel art still from video game *Taala Village*
2025
Image courtesy of the artist



Dinar Sultana



Bangladeshi artist Dinar Sultana uses organic sculptural methods and craft vocabularies developed while training at the renowned institution for arts education in West Bengal, Santiniketan. Sultana notes how familial rituals, seasonal festivities, agrarian cycles, allow for communal gathering that empower women within the largely patriarchal context of rural Bangladesh. Motifs from artisanal modes of nakshi kantha, terracotta pottery, jute, cane, and bamboo weaving recur in Sultana's creative language. Using handmade paper pulp with resin, clay, and natural dyes as key ingredients, she troubles the boundaries of fine art and living cultural vocabularies. Sultana also draws from utopian principles of modernist architecture and reorients these toward vernacular making.

For *Mother Goddess* (2025), Sultana embarked on a research and archiving journey in the village of Narsinghdi, to create a structure inspired by the Palaeolithic Venus de Willendorf and mother goddess deities found across ancient civilizational sites in South Asia. In Narsinghdi, village women gather to cook Nakshi Pitha, a traditional rice cake with intricate patterns. Sultana's goddess is a tangible archive of the oral

and artistic histories of women in this region, assembled in collective dialogues and workshops. The geometric, floral, and repetitive patterns in the rice cakes are, for Sultana, both "edible and encoded memory" and a form of local knowledge in need of preservation. The sculpture is accompanied by a photographic archive of the Nakshi Pitha patterns and social processes, drawing us into communal legacies. Sultana enlivens the divine and maternal source within everyday matriarchal acts.

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.

Supported by Goethe-Institut Bangladesh

Dinar Sultana
Mother Goddess
Image of work in progress
Burnt terracotta and resin composite
2025



Imaad Majeed



Imaad Majeed is a multidisciplinary artist, curator, and writer whose practice traverses sound, performance, and poetry to explore the intersections of identity, erasure, and belonging. Their ongoing sonic and archival project *KANNOORU* investigates the disappearing soundscapes of Sufi practices in Sri Lanka, combining sample-based electronic music, archival recordings, and spectrogram visuals to reimagine how devotion, loss, and memory can be heard. Drawing from traditions such as the Rifai, Qadiriyya, and Shazuliya orders, *KANNOORU* becomes both an archive and an act of resistance against the reformist erasures that mark Sufi sound as transgressive. Majeed evokes melodies from Arabic maqam traditions by recreating these rhythms through percussive instruments, such as the daff and darbuka, recalling and circulating the musical, spiritual, and communal devotional legacies.

Ruptures Toward a Lover's Futurity (2025) is an extension of this research presented at *Rhythm Alliances*. It is a meditation on the Sufi notion of *wajd*, an affective spectrum that denotes ecstatic rapture and rupture, explored through the convergence of sound and rhythm—the percussive *kalikambu/polladi* dance performed by men in Eastern Sri Lanka,

and a recording of women singing an old flower-plucking song—folk practices that are fast receding and being forgotten from the evolution of traditional practice. Evoked within an alcove featuring calligraphic texts, dyed textiles adorned in the likeness of Sri Lankan Sufi flags echoing the Jailani festival's charged flag rites, and a mechanical device echoes the dance through the motorized rhythmic clash, bracketed by the melodies sung by women. At moments, their rhythms align; at others, they diverge, producing an auditory fissure between grief and joy. Here, rhythm becomes rupture, an opening through which erased lineages of practice resurface and converse. The work queers tradition, weaving men's rituals and women's ceremonial invocations into a shared pulse that gestures toward futurity.

Fabrication assistance: Faloona Naoshaad, Aisha Anver, Dreamspace. Sound archival source: "Folk Songs of the Muslims of Sri Lanka" produced and released by Muslim Women's Research & Action Forum

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
With thanks to Hatch MakerStudio



Imaad Majeed

Ruptures Toward A Lover's Futurity

Installation with handmade flags, mechanical rhythm
device, archival audio, wood, metal, electronics, sound
2026

Jegatheeswaran Keshavan



Jegatheeswaran Keshavan's practice responds to the centuries of discrimination endured by plantation workers in the hill country of Sri Lanka, since they were brought to the island as bonded labour from South India during the British regime. He creates collaged paintings, sculptures, and installations that critically engage with housing issues and agrarian labour in the rubber and tea industries of Sri Lanka, communities of which his family has been part of for generations, since his grandparents were forcibly displaced from South India.

The labourer becomes a central protagonist in the newly envisioned installation *Vulcanized life with sterility* (2025) by Keshavan for Rhythm Alliances. He experiments with discarded rubber particles to depict the labour cycle of a rubber industry worker, recreating their bodily experience through stained workwear. This workwear holds a similar dense brown texture, both literally and figuratively marking the difficult working conditions rubber plantation workers experience to earn a meagre daily wage.

Keshavan highlights how his community holds no rights to land ownership and will likely continue to work on others' land, in a state of alienation and disenfranchisement. In his paintings, closely stacked line housing depict the living circumstances on Sri Lanka's rubber and tea plantations, where limited space is shared by multiple generations of the same family. Reminders of human anatomy such as limbs and feet appear among the line houses, conveying that through the industrialisation of rubber-making and the exploitative treatment of estate workers, inhumane conditions persist. Keshavan reflects, "The written rule is that no matter how much we study or earn, we can never own a piece of land—not even our garden."

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka

Jegatheeswaran Keshavan
Infinity
Mixed media on canvas
2024



Josèfa Ntjam



Josèfa Ntjam is an artist and performer whose practice moves fluidly between sculpture, photomontage, film, and sound works. Her experimental approaches often bring forth collaborations among the Black diaspora in France and produce what she framed as “a rhizomatic imagining of history.” Gleaning the raw material of her work from the internet, books on natural sciences and photographic archives, and inspired by music lineage such as Detroit techno, Ntjam uses assemblage—of images, words, sounds, and stories—as a method to deconstruct grand narratives underlying hegemonic ways of being in the world.

Across projects Ntjam composes utopian cartographies and ontological fictions in which technological fantasy, intergalactic voyages and speculative underwater civilizations become the matrices for a practice of emancipatory and resilient future communities.

By centering black liberatory and anti-colonial thought in speculative world building, in her film and installation works, she brings together Afrocentric imaginaries and ancestral narratives with more-than-human cosmologies. The artist’s vivid aesthetics invite us into sentient places

and non-linear time spaces. These life-worlds of art making are a confluence of digital mediascapes, scientific research, and mythological chimeras.

Rhythm Alliances presents *Matter Gone Wild* (2023), an immersive poetic investigation into the mechanisms of resistance and power, embodied by three distinct characters who dwell within strange, psychedelic realms scattered across an unknowable multiverse. Rooted in reverence for ancestral legacies, Ntjam’s work unfolds through an archival approach with collage becoming her method of gathering, remembering, and re-imagining.

Supported by Art Hx, Embassy of France in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and Alliance Française de Colombo

Josèfa Ntjam

Stills from *Matter Gone Wild*, Video HD

Written and directed by Josèfa Ntjam

in collaboration with Sean Hart and Nicolas Pirus 2023

© ADAGP, Paris



Jovita Alvares



Jovita Alvares's multidisciplinary practice is rooted in research on personal and collective histories, questioning the gaps and dislocations in marginalized narratives and unearthing counter-histories that have been obscured by colonial and imperial legacies, particularly the Portuguese colonization of Goa (1510-1961) and the partition of the subcontinent into independent nation states. Through acts of collecting, reassembling, and interpreting familial and vernacular archives, Alvares reclaims agency over how histories are remembered and retold using lens-based media of photography and video, alongside text, textiles, and installation. Her practice engages with the aftermath of Partition, interrogating how these ruptures continue to shape belonging, identity, and the politics of memory across South Asia.

Re: cite, member, sist (2025) is a multisensory installation of domesticity that weaves together sound, textile, and light to trace intergenerational memory across land and sea. Anchored in her family's Goan history and her grandmother's migration to Karachi from Bardez, the work unfolds through layered cyanotypes, shadow drawings referencing early illustrations of Portuguese colonial exploits, tracings of

her grandmother's embroidery patterns on cushions, curtains, and household objects, and sound recordings of ocean tides and dialogues with her aunt, the last living relative born in Goa. The sea, simultaneously witness and archive, becomes both subject and collaborator.

Through this confluence of material and memory, Alvares proposes a mode of re-membering, piecing together what history dismembered, a tactile resistance against erasure where stories of women, water, and migration resurface through rhythm, intimacy, and return.

Sea embraces you; embraces me
lingering
endlessly, forever, together
Winds wisp against my cheek, gently murmuring
rhythms
You ebbed and flowed; you ebb and flow
We sit here today; tomorrow
yesterday to
seek
to touch to taste
to have to hold
to linger to lose
surrender
Sea embraced you; embraced me

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by the Experimenter Generator Co-
operative Art Production Fund and Goethe-
Insitut Pakistan*



Jovita Alvares

Re: cite, member, sist (detail)

Site-specific installation with textile, 4-channel sound, and found material

2026





Mahesha Kariyapperuma

Mahesha Kariyapperuma explores diverse ecologies, botanical life and endangered animal habitats across the island through interactive media, wearable art, and installations. She also critically explores social codes of Kandyan culture, as well as gender norms and societal hierarchies in Sri Lanka's Hill Country. Her projects often animate gaming techniques as tools for awareness building and education. Kariyapperuma inventively engages with the intersections between ecology, aesthetics, and social commentary through sustainable materials and communal philosophies.

Her work *The Eye* (2025) at Colomboscope connects Kandyan dance, drum making, ecology, and ritual, and imagines the eleven 'births' and one 'death' of a Kandyan drum according to the traditional Sinhalese life calendar. Kariyapperuma's work retells the birth and death of the Kandyan drum from an environmental perspective in two circular fabric panels reminiscent of the painted murals in Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka. On the roof panel, the life of the drum begins with the death of the tree—its branches, struck by lightning during the monsoons, are then used as raw material to build the drum. The various

steps involved in crafting the Kandyan drum are evoked in relation with its use in ceremonies such as weddings, Sinhala and Tamil New Year celebrations, school functions, as well as processions and rituals such as Kohomba Kankariya.

The Kandyan drum is considered to create an atmosphere of psychological transformation connecting material and cosmic layers, according to anthropologist Gananath Obeyesekere. Kariyapperuma explores this perspective of healing rites, curing dances and exorcism, while drawing attention to the environmental protocols and impact around the production of traditional drums. The ground panel depicts the roots of a tree, where one may sit and contemplate these cycles of making, in resonance with depictions around local traditions, festivities, and rituals.

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka*

Mahesha Kariyapperuma
Detail from *The Eye*
Digital print and paint on textile
2025



KMRU's sound practice is a universe traversing field recording, improvisation, drone, sonic collage, installation, and radio art. Working with found and analog ambient sounds, his compositions move through the affective textures of listening—attuned to how sound shapes memory, place, and perception. Whether through machine learning or minimal composition, his practice embodies deep listening: an attunement to the temporalities of environments and their shifting rhythms. Alongside this, he honors his grandfather and namesake, Joseph Kamaru, the celebrated Kenyan activist and Benga musician, by reissuing his music and continuing his legacy of sonic storytelling.

Float – a Wind of Time (2025) is a radiophon-ic sound work emerging from KMRU's ongoing research on port cities and the islands of Fiji, and more recently, Lamu in Kenya, developed during the residency *Mangrove Ecologies: Life Between Ebb & Flow*. Here, the mangrove becomes both metaphor and methodology, a porous frame for exploring the intertidal rhythms of coastal ecologies where land and ocean continually negotiate time and human presence.

The structure of *Float* mirrors the rhizomatic networks of mangroves, composed through grooving seascapes and field recordings gathered during sensorial and intuitively-led journeys of the past two years. Drifting through layers of tide, wind, and human voice, the piece evokes buoyancy, opacity, slowness, and surrender, “connecting geographies across archipelagos, intentionally probing zones of disorientation but also of potential.”

KMRU situates listening as both contemplative and ecological. *Float* meditates on rhythm as a force that shapes and dissolves boundaries—a portal between movement and stillness, self and environment, memory and the present. Echoing Euphrase Kezilahabi's poem *Upepo wa Wakati* (*The Wind of Time*), the work becomes an elemental current: an invitation to listen with, rather than to, the world, tracing the pulse of coexistence carried by sea, wind, and time.

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka and TBA21—Academy



KMRU

Float - a wind of time

Installation with 4-channel sound, net, scent, and digital
photographs on paper
2026





Sabeen Omar



Sabeen Omar's practice engages with the rhythms of the everyday using materials that are often discarded. Informed by her background in mathematics, Omar creates geometric structures on handmade, impermanent, imperfect canvases of clothing, bed linen, handkerchiefs, and cardboard collected at home. Her family lineage is rooted in the Memon community of Gujarat and Tamil Nadu in India, and her recent works have also drawn inspiration from Mughal architecture—especially doorways and thresholds—extending such motifs to explore moments in life as both beginnings and endings. Her works hold layers of chalk gesso on fabric, watercolour, threadwork, and pigment. The gesso cracks, revealing the softness beneath. This repetitive process of softness and hardness is, as she says: "Additive and subtractive. Here but elsewhere. Inside and out. Ephemeral but infused with love." For this process, Omar finds inspiration in poetry, lyrical musings, and conversations and observations within domestic spaces.

In her project for Colomboscope, Omar leans into the intergenerational embodied rhythms of sewing, needlework, beading, and crocheting as practised by the maternal side of her family. Each work is made of a discarded family bedsheet and pieces of her sister's shalwar, which have been first coated with gesso and then disrupted by pieces of crochet and beadwork while evoking the bodily rhythms that would have gone into the patterns that emerge. For Omar, crocheting is a special and new aspect as she experiences how the process transmits meaning from hand to thread. Omar's visual works are accompanied by a sound piece that homes in on the intergenerational linguistics of her blended, multicultural family with roots in Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, and Colombo. Her mother and grandmother sing lullabies and speak to her son in Sinhala, English, and Gujarati interwoven with non-verbal hums and soft murmurs beside rainfall and sounds filtering through her garden studio.

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka*

Sabeen Omar
*We work too hard.
 We're too tired
 to fall in love.
 therefore we must overthrow the government.*
 (Rod Smith)
 Gouache, fabric dye, oil pastel, colored
 pencil, graphite, thread, beads,
 handkerchief, tinted chalk gesso
 2022



Sabeen Omar
*we work too hard.
 we're too tired
 to overthrow the government.
 therefore we must fall in love. (Rod Smith)*
 Gouache, fabric dye, oil pastel, colored
 pencil, graphite, thread, beads,
 handkerchief, tinted chalk gesso
 2022

Sarah Kazmi



Tracing the porous relationships between food, language, and politics, Sarah Kazmi's practice spans across research, writing, and visual production. Based between Oslo and Karachi, she transforms texts rooted in community and local environments into rhythm, materialised through sound, performance, installation, and moving image.

The Wild Fruit(s) unfolds as a sensorial and spiritual inquiry into food as both offering and abstinence. Drawing from *Shah jo Risalo*, the poetic compendium of Sindhi Sufi mystic Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, and the Sanskrit concept of *Rasa*, the project reflects on taste as sentiment, bridging the tangible and emotional. It explores how recipes, rituals, and poetry sustain collective memory and propose ways of living beyond material wealth. Structured around six melodies—*Sur Kalyan*, *Yaman Kalyan*, *Ramkali*, *Samundi*, *Khahori*, and *Marui*—that mark the day's temporal cycles, the project evokes seekers' quests for physical and spiritual sustenance across mountains and sea, focusing in particular on *Sur Samundi*, which traverses the transoceanic journey from Sindh to Sri Lanka.

In dialogue with her mother and scholar Bisharat Ali Faqeer, Kazmi navigates food's duality between the sacred and sensual. Staged as an installation using edible native plants and grains, the work contemplates nourishment and sacrifice as intertwined acts of care where every offering becomes a form of remembering, and every taste, a prayer. Kazmi encounters the kitchen as a site of music, devotion, and inheritance. Here, cooking becomes language; instruments echo utensils; and recipes are recited, not written—where gestures, sounds, and scents preserve ancestral knowledge. The live sonic performance with Mariama Ndure and Nuwan Gunawardhana, *Daira*, traces Pakistani, Gambian, and Sri Lankan folk tales, oral traditions, and recipes, woven through rhythm, resonance, and the shifting textures of voice.

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by the Office of Contemporary Art (OCA) Norway and Arts Council Norway (Kulturådet)

Sarah Kazmi
Home sweet home/meethay ghar
Digital photo print on archival
hahnemühle satin rag paper
2022, 2024



Tashyana Handy and Sakina Aliakbar



Tashyana Handy and Sakina Aliakbar are an artist duo whose practice connects narrative creation, expansive literary pursuits, and the development of aural landscapes in both live and recorded settings. Their work has centred on language, migration, identity, and grief in the Sri Lankan context, taking form as live poetry performances accompanied by soundscapes.

In their first-ever installation as an artist duo, Handy and Aliakbar present *For Private View and Public Disappearance* (2025) at Colomboscope, deconstructing their everyday lives through objects that are outwardly mundane yet carry deeply personal significance, as recounted through poetry and sound. *For Private View and Public Disappearance* is described by the artists as an “intuitive and emotional archive” emerging from their propensity to keep, hoard and forget. It represents a young woman’s bedroom—a space that holds tactile extensions of the poems the duo recite in the score.

The poem ‘Viharamahadevi’ re-imagines the ancient Lankan queen against the backdrop of radical feminist theory, and an excerpt of an essay by feminist scholar Kumari Jayawardena. ‘Foucault

in the absence of dancing’ tells a broken love story depicted with a giftwrapped hardcover book of philosophy by Michel Foucault.

The two artists describe the accompanying score as, “a slowly evolving sound composition built from original poetry, voice notes, ambient recordings, breath, and fragments of music and noise.” Containing and disrupting the passage of time, the score resonates with the artists’ journey of crafting a shared body of work. The installation represents the duo’s entanglements with grief, love, care, debt, and friendship, as young women living through economic, social, and political upheavals of contemporary Sri Lanka.

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope 2026
and 421 Arts Campus
Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka



Excerpt from 'Foucault in the absence of dancing'

by Tashyana Handy

So, with legs crossed and heartbroken,
you reach for your feet,
only to find the anklet your best friend
had given you two years ago.

The red and green gemstones,
smothered in silver, remind you
of all the princesses in Tamil poetry,
the ones you never truly understood.

You had worn your bronze hoop earrings
in hopes that he would just see You
as someone who was ready
for this, and for the countless ideas you
have been given to become.

You bought him Foucault,
French philosopher you have been
meaning to read,
with a debit card that was rejected at a fast-food joint.

You wrapped Foucault,
French philosopher and possible matchmaker,
in beautiful second-hand wrapping paper
you thought was beautiful enough

to gift a second time over.
You wrapped Foucault and beautiful
second-hand wrapping paper
in a ribbon, tinged in gold, only slightly.

Rio Complex

Basir Mahmood
Dinoj Mahendranathan
Tharmapalan Tilaxan
Yara Asmar

Interrupted Tonalities

Colomboscope has for over a decade chronicled the history of this monumental architecture from a glorious cinema of the 1950s to its scarring during the direct attacks and destruction of the 'Black July' pogrom of 1983. Over the past decade, this building has been revived as a space of community building, remembrance, and neighbourhood histories within a metropolis that is prone to amnesia and ambitious urban redevelopment. In this iconic venue, Rhythm Alliances enters a disappearing world of film studios, crews, and stunt actors who invigorate film industries. The forgotten materiality of cassette players host multiple dialogues, laments, and instruction. Monochromatic photography recalls landscapes of war, where bodies uphold encoded memory and roam as apparitions across earth and cosmos. Drumming cultures and seasonal celebrations in Eastern Sri Lanka are depicted through a percussion-centered installation. The Rio Complex also hosts live music acts, conversations, and performances through this festival edition. These encounters generate critical registers that revive, recontextualize, and seed alternative futures.





RHYTHM ALLIANCES

EXHIBITION VENUE

Basir Mahmood



Basir Mahmood's practice unfolds between memory and re-enactment, drawing from knowledge that is received, embodied, and regenerated through collective experience. Over the past decade, he has engaged with actors, musicians, dancers, stunt doubles, and technicians from Pakistan's fading film industry, *Lollywood*, tapping into imaginaries that reveal evolving social behaviors as they adapt to changes in state policy and cultural censorship while internalizing major political and cultural shifts, both national and global. His works often emerge from what persists after decline: the incomplete, the interrupted, and the unrecorded. Through video and sound, Mahmood extends the lifespan of these fragile inheritances, transforming them into living archives of labour, emotion, and form.

For *A Body Bleeds More than it Contains* (2026), Mahmood returns to Bari Studios, one of Pakistan's oldest film studios that has been both a site of research and collaboration these past 10 years, recently demolished after being acquired by a private housing development project. Once a vital site of cultural production, it now survives only through memory and dispersed

communities. This video work is conceived as a one-day procession and filmed as a multi-channel installation inviting former collaborators to respond to the site through movement, song, and sound.

Denied physical access to the site, their presence becomes an invocation: an echo reclaiming the land through rhythm and recollection. Positioned between absence and endurance, the work meditates on how knowledge and ritual persist beyond displacement. By reanimating a space of collective creativity that faces erasures due to urban transformation, Mahmood insists on conjured proximity that can be experienced not just momentarily but sustained as an act of alliance.

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by Mondriaan Funds and The
Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
in Sri Lanka*



Basir Mahmood
 Stills from *A Body Bleeds More than it Contains*
 Single-channel video with 5-channel sound
 2026





Dinoj Mahendranathan



Dinoj Mahendranathan is a music producer and sound artist from Batticaloa whose creative pursuits connect ecologies and acoustic stories, especially amidst the lagoon environment and performance cultures in his surroundings. In recent years he has been creating instruments from found materials and building an inventory of field recordings of bird song, wind currents and forest interiors, simultaneously engaging with Tamil folk songs and traditional Kooththu music from the East. His sonic practice is a blend of memory, production and cultural polyphony relating to the North and East of Sri Lanka. As the founder and director of DreamSpace Records, he also documents underrepresented voices from the area through original music compositions, Tamil rap lyrics, and multimedia storytelling, blending traditional and electronic sounds with the aim of presenting collaborative narratives.

Circles of Rhythm and Rains (2025) is a kinetic sound installation located at the Rio Complex. Meditating on percussion-based circulation and cultural praxes, the artist takes inspiration from the parai drum, played during temple festivals, funerals, and other special occasions in North Eastern Sri Lanka. Generations of music practitioners

from Vavuniya, Batticaloa, and Kilinochchi also engage with the drum to remember, exorcize, and recuperate from the traumatic epoch of civil war. Dinoj relates to agrarian cycles and rainfall descending into soil when conceiving the acoustic atmosphere of his project. Several types of drums are assembled; made from reclaimed wood and repurposed materials through skilled craftsmanship. They are programmed to create pulsating beat cycles in collaboration with DreamSpace lab as a layered interactive source directly engaging audiences in a percussive journey, between ritualistic and cosmic to mechanized encounter.

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope 2026 and 421 Arts Campus. Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka. With thanks to Arthshila and DreamSpace Academy.

The artist experimenting with percussion instruments and field recordings
Batticaloa and Santiniketan
2025



Tharmapalan Tilaxan

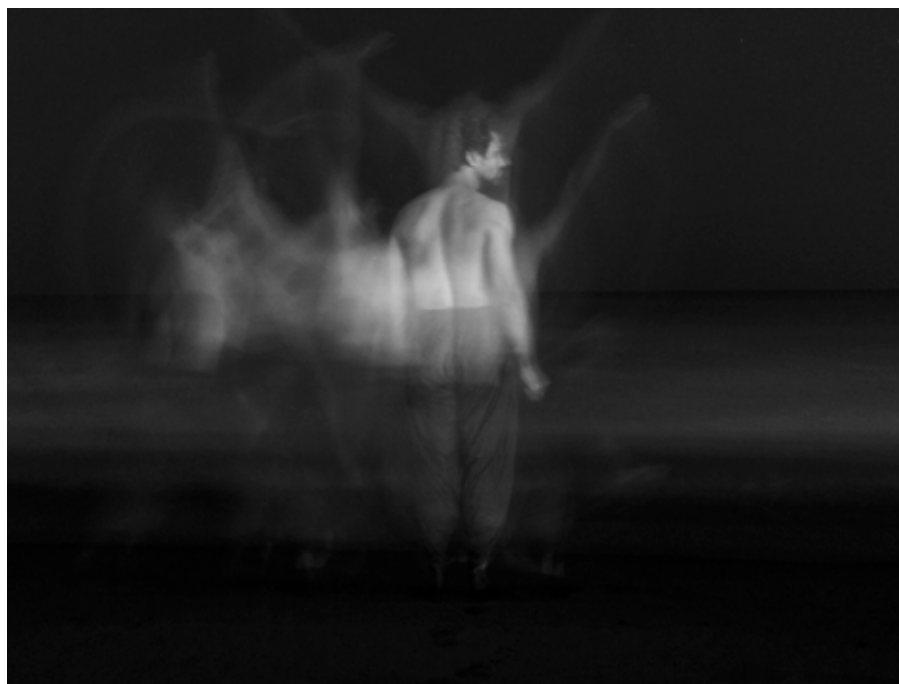
Characteristics of borders, boundaries, and belonging that emerge from ethnic conflict and civil war in Sri Lanka have been central to the practice of photographer and filmmaker Tharmapalan Tilaxan. Tilaxan has documented everyday renditions of culture, festivities, and nature in northern Sri Lanka, while immersing himself in research on early analogue photography, historic photo studios, and leading the Jaffna Photography Society. In 2020, he gained recognition for his documentation of human-elephant interaction at a mismanaged waste disposal site in Ampara. Meanwhile, Tilaxan has continued to capture the aftermath of war, its ruination, displacement, and lost homes.

Echoes of Stillness (2025) at Colomboscope is a newly commissioned series of photographs which Tilaxan describes as “landscapes shaped by silence, memory, and survival.” The series builds on his engagement with dancers portrayed among the natural landscape of the Northern region, connecting acts of choreography unfolding within living ecologies. The photographs were shot at night time near a railway, by the seascape in Mullivaikkal and

Puthukkudiyiruppu in Mullativu. These zones are still heavily securitized, as they were war sites where the Sri Lankan military brutally clashed with LTTE fighters. Despite police interventions and surveillance of his footage, Tilaxan has continued to develop this series. Using a vintage camera brings an intensity and depth to this photographic body—as Palmyrah trees embrace dark stillness whilst figures move as apparitions to unheard tunes. Reflecting on permanent injury, loss, and states of repair, *Echoes of Stillness* traces the histories carried within the body and how they intersect with porous landscapes as border defying sources of memory. As his lens lays focus on starry skies, which Tilaxan believes holds memories of ancestors and those lost to the war, he asks, “as apparitions, how do we roam our surroundings in both absence and presence, marking our grief?”

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka
and Kālam.*

Tharmapalan Tilaxan
From the series *Echoes of Stillness*
Photographs on archival paper
2026



Yara Asmar



Yara Asmar creates delicate, atmospheric compositions working across music, video art, and puppetry. She has been exploring the social and acoustic legacies of Beirut, Lebanon, and her third album *Stuttering Music* (2024) coincided with a resurgence of conflict. Using analogue sound technologies such as cassette players, recording devices, lo-fi processes, and at times broken instruments as well as the accordion and synth, her practice indulges in deconstructed music while building an index of home recordings and field studies.

During a recent residency at 421 Arts Campus in Abu Dhabi, Asmar developed the project *Lapses* (2024) that explores mourning, memory, and the fragile architectures through which loss is carried over time. This pursuit draws from field recordings of intimate conversations and funerary rituals yielding sonic fragments that are warped, looped and layered. Played across several devices as cassette loops, they prompt the listener to piece meaning and emotion together and reflect over how private grief, familial stories and acts of remembering yield collective experience and polyphonous histories.

Yara Asmar

Lapses

Interactive tape loop installation

2024

Photo credits: Lynn Sheikh Moussa



Lapses

"Most recorders were one track. The one I have has four tracks. I slaved away for so long before I could afford it! I dreamt of it for so long. Every time I passed in front of the store, I would look at it. One day, we were recording outside with the microphones. We were recording using the condenser microphone. I had two so I could record in stereo. They ended up recording both the sound of birds and the music we were trying to actually record. When we finished, we started listening and realised the sounds of the birds were much louder than the actual songs. The sounds ended up being blended. There were all kinds of birds in these recordings. Lovebirds. They sounded like bicycle horns. Their legs and beaks were red. There was also the cut-throat finch. A bird that looks like its throat had been slit because of the red line there. Remember it? They died during the war. Their ears exploded. Every morning we'd wake up and find 7-8 dead birds. Because of the shelling and the sounds of the explosions."

This is a transcription of one of the last recordings I have of my grandfather, telling me about how he accidentally recorded hours and hours of birdsong onto his reel-to-reel recorder.

I think a lot about the field recordings we inadvertently make, and about our relationship to sound. About the sound captured on VHS and phone videos almost as an afterthought.

On my recorder, you'll find hours and hours of conversations: My grandmother proudly telling me about how she scared off a man who was threatening her with a gun during the war, my grandfather telling me I could come by any time and pick any herbs from his garden, our first lunch after my grandfather's funeral, the first time that house that had grown quiet was suddenly animated with laughter and song. They are files all labelled by date. January 1, 2025, midnight. An explosion of sound: Fireworks, screams, gunshots, laughter, sirens.

by Yara Asmar

The city unfurls like a big sonic carpet of horns and sirens, the village as a blanket of cicadas and white noise, interrupted by the fluttering of plates, the sounds of bells, the rustling of the wind. I attempt to listen for the sounds that have sneaked into videos, made their way into a file, crackles and stutters, footsteps from the other room, laughter.

When I was commissioned by Radiophrenia Glasgow to put together a sonic play, I put together a sort of aural correspondence between two friends who could not agree whose house to meet in, due to disagreements on the structural integrity of the other's house.

In one of the letters, one friend tells the other that they are building a house out of sound.

"Out of of familiar footsteps shuffling in the other room, and drawers overflowing with
useless things, the last candy wrapper someone gave you before you never saw them
again, pebbles and seashells that you still haven't cleaned of the sand, and that smell
like the beach still, woodworking tools that faithfully and dutifully served for years,
buzzing and humming and whirring and singing.
Woodworking tools which now sit quietly on a bench.
Of the sound of objects that grow silent and go quiet.
Of boiling water
Of everyone you love yawning and sneezing
And sighing
The sound of windows opening on a sunny day
The rustling and crumpling of blankets
A broom, brushing against the bare floor
Then quietly, against the carpet,
And the city
The city!
The whirring and clicking and ticking of the city
The buzzing and creaking and humming and rattling of the city
Of the rumbling, humming, spinning city
That you hide from all day
And you will never hide from it again
Because there will be nothing to hide from
And it won't call for you to come outside
Because there will be no outside

It is a singing house that I am building us
Because every house we've lived in has sung for us
Has sung of us
And every room we've passed through still quietly sings of our passing through
Our absence in all these homes only means
That we were once there

It is a screaming house that I am building us

It is an unbreakable house because there is nothing to break

It is an untouchable house

Because there is nothing to touch

And a house that can follow us everywhere

And in that way you can never leave it

And it can never leave you

It is a house you can whistle

Wherever you are

And you will always have a house

That you can whistle like a tune

And that will always be yours

And no one will ever knock on your door

To tell you that rent is due

Because there is no door

And because there is no door, your friends can never leave

And their laughter bounces all around

And their laughter bounces all around

I am building us a house out of sound

And it sounds, a little bit like this:"

Radicle Gallery

Kaimurai
Kavan Balasuriya
Moe Satt
Mohammad Ali Talpur
Naiza Khan
Nina Mangalanayagam with Marie Bergqvist and
the Transnational Adoptee Choir: The Whale
Seher Shah
Stephen Champion
Tissa De Alwis
Vaimaila Urale
Vivian Caccuri

Tidal Tongues

Radicle Gallery is located within the neoclassical style heritage site De Mel Building at Chatham Street in Colombo Fort, the hub of trade, commercial, and maritime activity in Sri Lanka. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, leading trading companies, publishing houses, government offices, and department stores moved into the Colombo Fort. The Del Mel Building was first built in 1921 by lawyer and politician Henry De Mel for the administrative offices of his commercial ventures in agriculture. In 2025, Radicle opened as a hospitality and arts venue. Echoing these surroundings, artists explore urban archeology, maritime history, and colonial architecture as well as inventive visual storytelling tuning into ambient records of the island and the broader Indian Ocean region. Through experimental choreography and figurative sequences, as well as a natural dyed textile drape by Delhi-based design studio 11.11, the entrance floor turns into a staging ground. In the basement gallery, abstract and minimalist notation and literary compositions trace fields of resonant mark making, vibration, and complex frequencies through drawing, acoustics, and motion. Other projects simultaneously chart the lifecycle sonorously through a choir, as well as hindustani and carnatic ragas — a gradient from lullaby to lament.



RHYTHM ALLIANCES

EXHIBITION VENUE

Kaimurai



Kaimurai's practice unfolds at the intersection of materiality, spirituality, and sound. Rooted in the use of natural indigo, his works unfold as meditative explorations of energy, rhythm, and memory through organic forms inspired by the Western Ghats, South Indian architecture, ritual traditions, and the tonal structures of Carnatic music. His mark-making ranges from delicate strokes to bold, gestural movements that reflect an ongoing dialogue between tranquility and turbulence, embodying the artist's search for harmony within the flow of existence. In his practice, indigo is both medium and metaphor, a sacred pigment that carries the resonance of touch, collective labour, memory, and devotion. His process mirrors ritual, where the act of repetition emphasizes continuity, transforms gesture into prayer, and the body becomes a vessel for both the physical and the metaphysical. The entwined nature of the material and the spiritual in Kaimurai's practice emerges from the South Indian philosophical thought, "*andamum pindamum ondre*," translated as "the Macrocosm and Microcosm are one and the same."

For Rhythm Alliances, Kaimurai's contemplative installation *Sāyanambari / Neelambari*, is inspired by the Carnatic raga *Neelambari* (2025), traditionally associated with lullabies and sleep. Evoking the liminal states between wakefulness and rest, life and death, the sound and textile installation transforms the faint memories of his mother's lullabies and father's resting rhythms into form. A suspended drape of handwoven, unbleached khadi partially dyed with natural indigo represents a *thottil* (cradle), while the indigo stained urn underneath the fabric, suggests the stillness of the grave. Between these transitions into and out of the physical world, the sound of *Neelambari*, which also translates as blue sky, breathes rhythmic life into the space, a meditation on birth, rest, and release that prepares the viewer to inhabit and navigate this world.

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.

Supported by BluePrint12

Kaimurai

The Divine Blue

Installation of indigo on khadi cotton with sound

2022

Installation view at the Kaash Foundation, Bangalore

Image courtesy of BluePrint12







Kaimurai

Thulabhara

Installation of indigo on khadi
cotton with sound and smell
2023

Installation view at Anant Art
Gallery, Delhi

Image courtesy of BluePrint12

Kavan Balasuriya



With a practice dedicated to drawing and engraving, Sri Lankan artist Kavan Balasuriya uses mark-making, geometry and architectural motifs to explore the interweaving of abstraction, built environments, and vibration. Recently adopting aluminium foil as his chosen medium for its fragility, sensitivity, and propensity to hold luminosity, Balasuriya engages with the dichotomies of light and shadow, movement and stillness, surface and depth, as well as abstraction and realism, through the elemental surface of a foil plate.

For *Rhythm Alliances*, Balasuriya has developed *Firmament of Sound* (2025), a foil engraving series that is inspired by time signatures in Indian classical music, particularly those ragas associated with the winter and spring seasons, which echo the spirit of repose and renewal. This commissioned series comprises sixteen individual square panels that contain notations, mapping pulsations and oscillations in repetitive circular compositions that represent the cyclical nature of temporality, percussive nodes, as well as the resonance of full and empty beats in Indian classical melodic structures. Each composition is an engagement

with and interpretation of taals, or time signatures, that ground raga lexicons in rhythmic patterns. Sixteen panels is the cumulative result of the most abundant taal, the Teental, which comprises a 4 + 4 + 4 + 4 beat structure.

The panels include exploring the Rupak taal's beat structure of 3 + 2 + 2 engraved in sine wave-like lines, which seek to convey the atmospheric experience of listening to the taal. Balasuriya notes, "this series as a whole is intended to interpret, modulate, manipulate, and improvise engraving on foil, conveying experiences of resonance—sound expressed as light interacting with matter."

Kavan Balasuriya

Detail from *Interstice*

2022

Aluminium foil on foamboard



Moe Satt



Emerging from a generation of artists who navigated censorship and repression in Myanmar, Moe Satt is a Burmese visual and performance artist who explores identity, embodiment, and political resistance through his body as both subject and medium. Drawing from Burma's political landscape between 1983 and 2015, Satt engages history and the present through conceptual performance, tracing the shifting terrain of personal and collective agency. His ongoing exploration of hand and facial gestures transforms anatomy into a language of quiet defiance, entangling tradition and empathy where movement becomes both expression and resistance. In recent years, his practice has evolved toward collaborative and participatory formats, extending his embodied vocabulary across cultures and audiences.

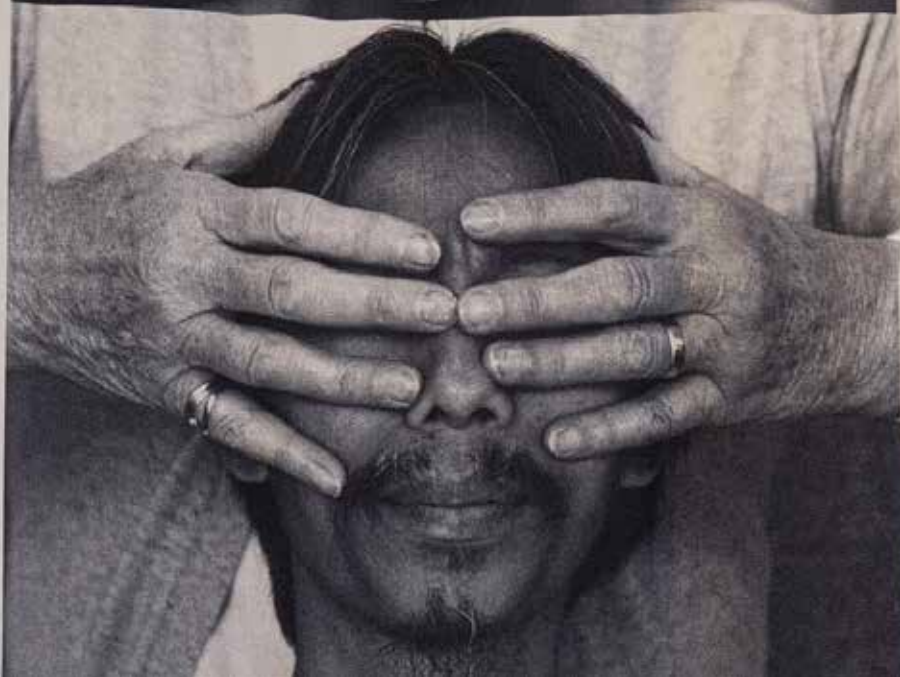
For Rhythm Alliances, Satt continues his long-term project *Face and Fingers*, expanding its second phase in collaboration with Sri Lankan performers. Together, they have developed cross-cultural vocabularies of gesture informed by local literature, art history, and everyday life. Through open rehearsal performances, and a spatial installation comprising a textile panel with digital photographic prints

of this gestural vocabulary and resin sculptures that capture different hand movements extending beyond the performance, Satt invites audiences into the process of interpreting and co-creating this gestural lexicon. In a region marked by shared histories of silence and resistance, Satt's work gestures toward the body as a vessel of memory, protest, and care, transmitting rhythms of renewal beyond borders.

Performance collaborators include Sangarapillai Priyasaravanan and Sneha Deshapriya

*Co-commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by the Mondriaan Funds and the
Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
in Sri Lanka*

Moe Satt
F 'N' F (Face and Fingers)
Digital prints on paper
2008–present



Mohammad Ali Talpur

Working predominantly in the monochromatic registers of black and white, Mohammad Ali Talpur explores the visual and sonic potential of the line. Nurtured by the cultural and poetic traditions of Sindh, his practice is deeply informed by mystical thought and the rhythmic disciplines of calligraphy, ceramics, and textiles. His paintings and drawings engage language, abstraction, and minimalism, referencing the printed page on which lines vibrate and shift, transforming static marks into optical rhythms. As Talpur describes, his work seeks to “translate text, convert sounds into pictorial form, and free them from their original purpose of readability and communication.”

Rooted in calligraphic heritage, yet distinctly contemporary, Talpur's work embodies both discipline and meditation. The celebrated and continuing *Leeka* series (2008-ongoing) marks a pivotal evolution in his practice, born from an urge to ‘undo’ painting and rediscover its fundamentals. The word *Leeka*, Sindhi for ‘meaningless,’ also implies crossing a barrier (*leeka langheygayo*). Through the repetition of fine, hand-drawn lines, Talpur explores how meaning dissolves

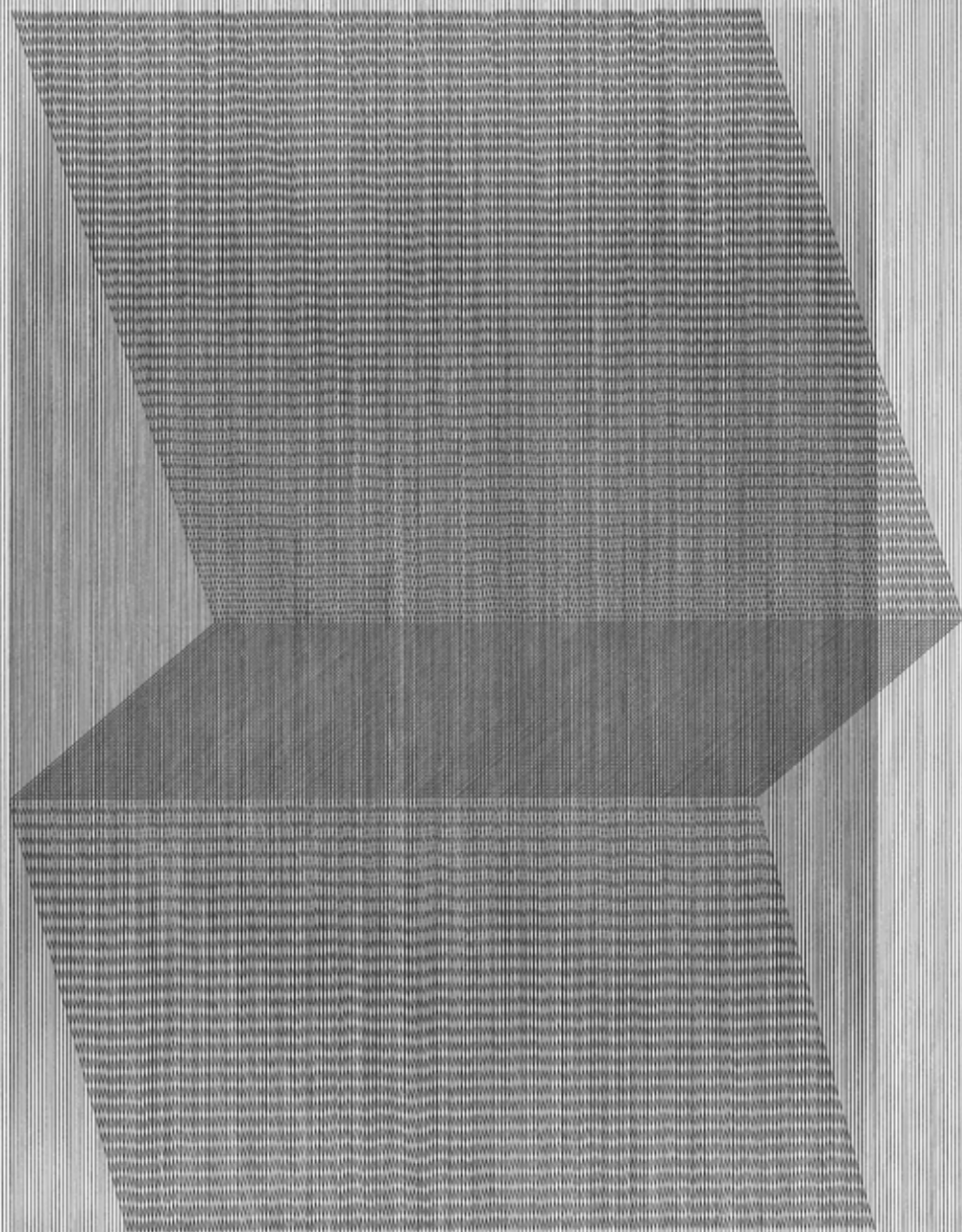
and re-emerges through rhythm and variation, much like a raga in classical music or a verse in mystical poetry.

Each composition is built through meticulous mark-making, producing dense, woven fields of ink that oscillate between visibility and blur. The eye drifts between recognition and disorientation as it immerses and floats across the composition, intertwining sensory perception and stretching the realms of translation and transmission. These monochrome surfaces evoke movement, sound, and spectral color, yet resist any fixed interpretation.

In the *Leeka* works, Talpur transforms the act of drawing into a meditative gesture, an inquiry into perception and presence, where the visible becomes a form of listening, and silence itself becomes the subject.

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by Goethe-Institut Pakistan
and Grosvenor Gallery*

Mohammad Ali Talpur
Leeka I
Marker pen on paper
2023



Naiza Khan



Questioning inscriptions of power on body, land, and oceanic expanses, Naiza Khan explores ideas of embodiment, ecology, and the layered histories of place throughout her artistic and academic trajectory. Grounded in research and mapping, her practice moves fluidly between drawing, printmaking, film, and sound, tracing the complex intersections of geography and collective memory. Through a process of counter-mapping, Khan reimagines the 'geometry of empire' as porous and shifting geographies, dissolving into histories of water, labour, and resistance.

Khan's project extends this inquiry through an interrelated constellation of sound bites, brass relief sculptures, and watercolour drawings. Layering archival recordings, street sounds, protest songs, and spoken recollections, the soundscape *Durbeen* (2024–25) traces how rhythm and resonance migrate across time and territory. Here, sound becomes both a cartography and a pulse, a means to recall collective acts of resistance and remembrance. The brass relics become a site of memory and transformation, unfixing the measured order of empire. Geometry liquefies in these brass 'flat packs',

echoing colonial era infrastructures such as bridges, aqueducts, and forts, and reappears in the fluid, leaking structures of the watercolour drawings.

Through the extended shadows and the transposed sonic reverberations, the brass reliefs unfix the measured order of empire, transforming remnants of control into vessels of memory.

The watercolors evoke the instability of coastlines and the fluid borders of the Indian Ocean rim. Through lemon yellow stains, seepage, and light, they embody a leakage, denoting geographies in motion. Together, these works compose a performative map, like the 'durbeen' attuned to the resonances between land, body, and sound. Here, the act of listening transforms into a mode of witnessing, a reclamation of voice, history, and space through vibrations and echo.

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.

Naiza Khan

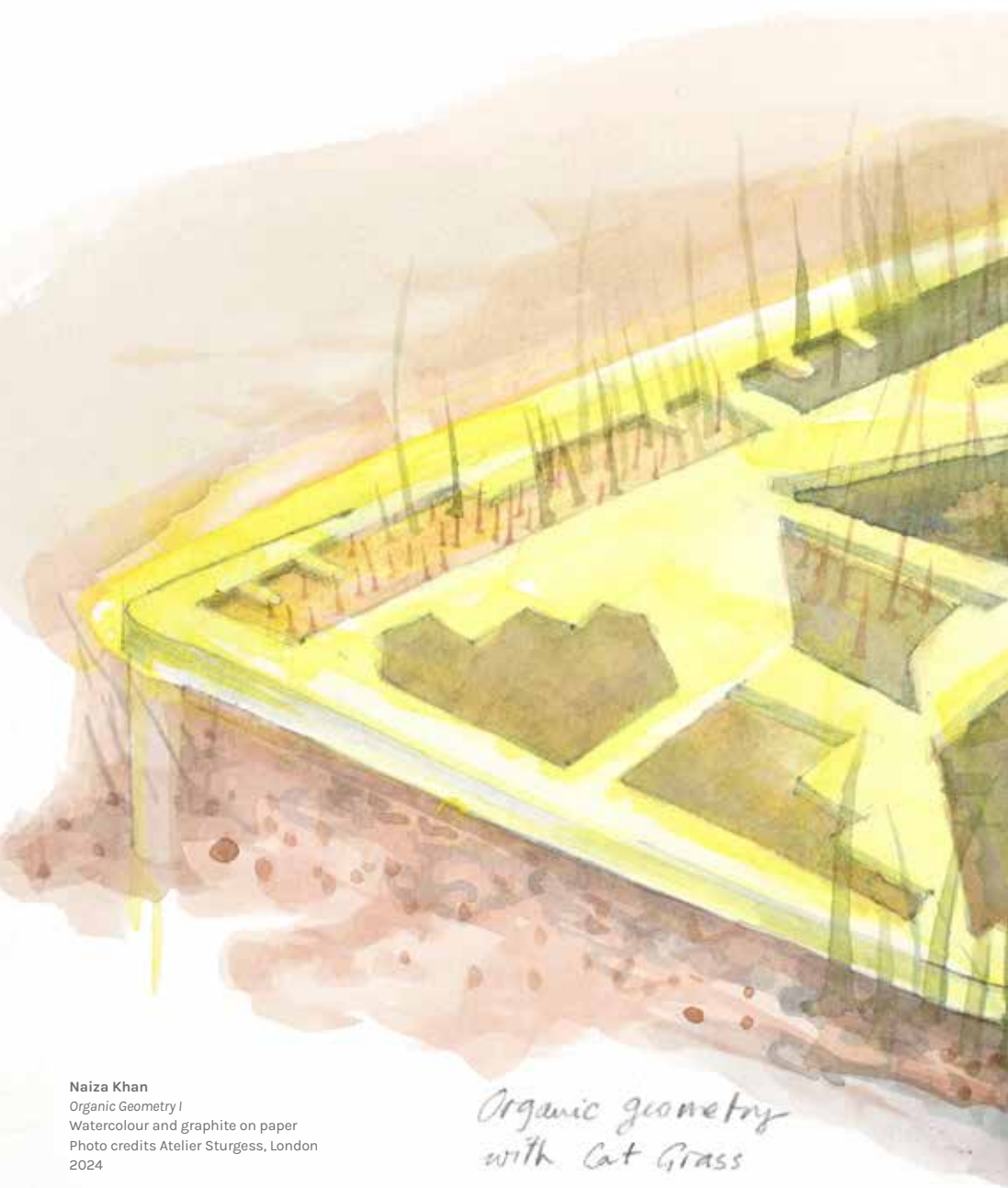
Flatpack no.2

Brass

Photo credits: Bilal Ahmed Qazi, Karachi

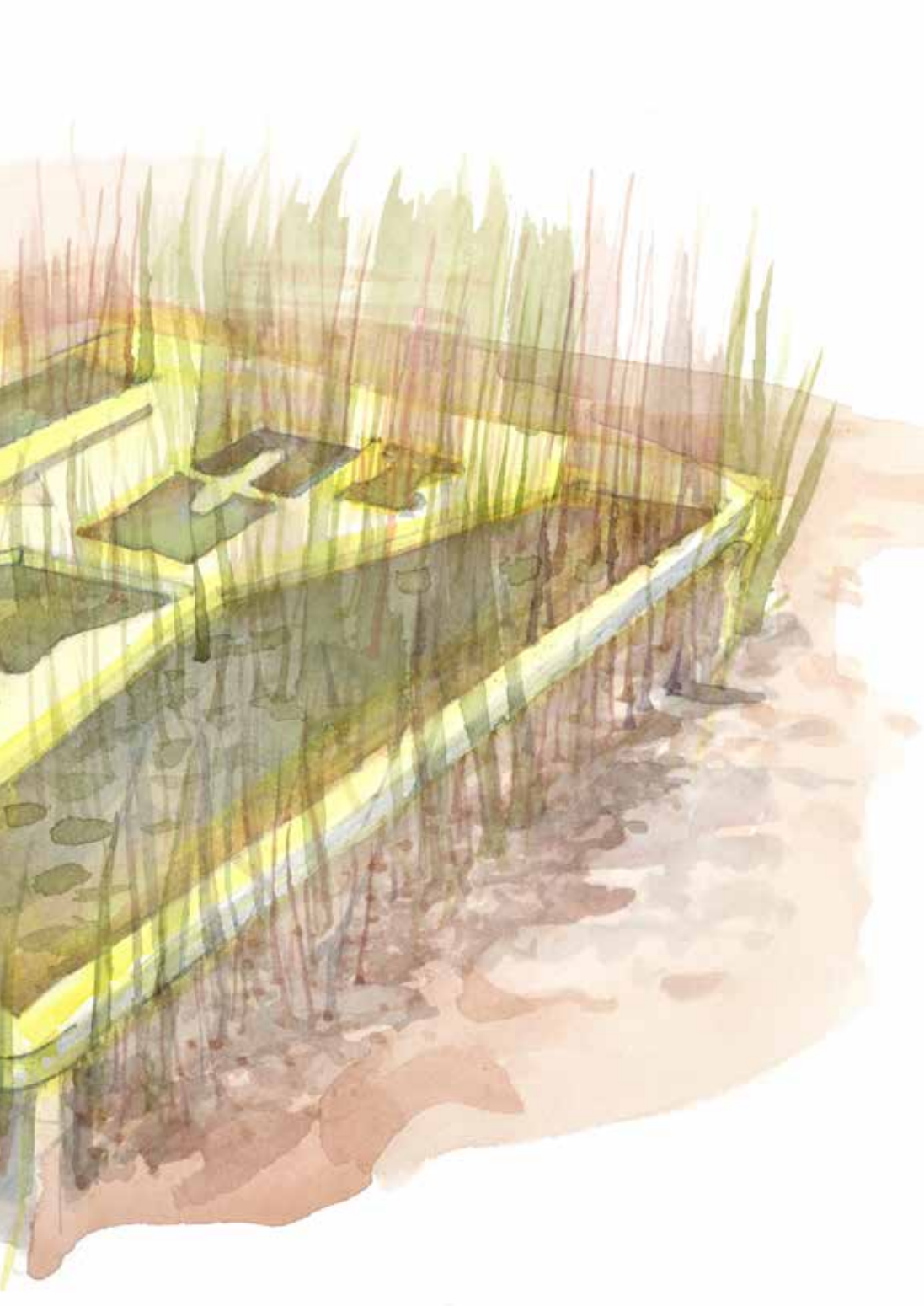
2024






Naiza Khan
Organic Geometry I
Watercolour and graphite on paper
Photo credits Atelier Sturgess, London
2024

*Organic geometry
with Cat Grass*





Nina Mangalanayagam with Marie Louise Dilmaya Bergqvist and the Transnational Adoptee Choir: The Whale

Artists and researchers Nina Mangalanayagam and Marie Bergqvist come together with their training in lens-based practices and sound making in *A song from across the sea* (2025) for Colomboscope. Mangalanayagam's practice engages with the topics of diasporic existence, home, foreignness, and displacement through photographs and moving image works. Bergqvist explores themes of separation, enforced transformation, and survival through oral traditions, which capture grief and loss.

Mangalanayagam and Bergqvist begin their collaboration with the story of a whale calf that was killed in 1865, taxidermied and placed in the Natural History Museum in Gothenburg, Sweden. They extend this narrative into an analogy for systemic irregularities in international adoption, such as falsified and missing records, coercion, state-sanctioned neglect, and child trafficking, in relation to countries including Sri Lanka. *A song from across the sea* is a collaborative project that responds to this complex theme with video documentation of a transnational choir of Swedish adoptees humming a musical score from Sweden's colonial-era presence in Saint Barthélemy. These

18th-century notes identified by historian Fredrik Thomasson signify rhythms of remembrance, resistance, and renewal. Mangalanayagam and Bergqvist say, "By turning to the hum as both wound and world, loss and desire, the work intends to offer resonance instead of erasure—making humming a space for survival through embodied diasporic knowledge and collective speculation, moving between lament and lullaby." The hum becomes both a call to the unknown and lost past, and a response that fosters diasporic togetherness, belonging, and finding a catalyst to discuss the invisible wounds of adoption with peers.

The Whale is led by its conductor David Juan Andersson, with members Marie Louise Dilmaya Bergqvist, Veronica D'Arrò, Daniel Cheul Gustavsson, Michael Lee Sørenmo, Linda Mee Engberg, Sara Paulsson, Johanna Zoo-Hee Rydholm, Fanny Kimberly Dahlpil, Emma Neha Bobeck, Andreas Pedro Hallén, Johan Babu Nana Lidrot, and Anna Dilhani Sandgren.

Co-commissioned by Colomboscope 2026 and Aranya Art Center

Video Editing: Rasmus Ohlander

Sound Design: Mappe Persson

Coloring: Tommy Spaanheden



Nina Mangalanayagam with
 Marie Louise Dilmaya Bergqvist
 and the Transnational Adoptee Choir: *The Whale*
 Stills from *A song from across the sea*
 Single channel video with 4-channel audio
 2025





Seher Shah

Seher Shah engages with notations and abstraction through the use of observed citation forms and mark-making inspired by literary worlds and private encounters. Through printmaking methods (etchings, photogravures, monotypes and woodcuts) and architectural perspective drawings using charcoal, graphite, and ink, the artist has developed a distinct intimate grammar about spatial memory and historical cycles via geometric constructions, inhabited sites, and poesis. Having formally studied architecture, Shah is interested in how urban built environments hold plural yet often silenced memories of the socio-political, climate, especially in South Asia, in relation to upheavals such as the partitioning of India, and the violence and divisions inherent in the region

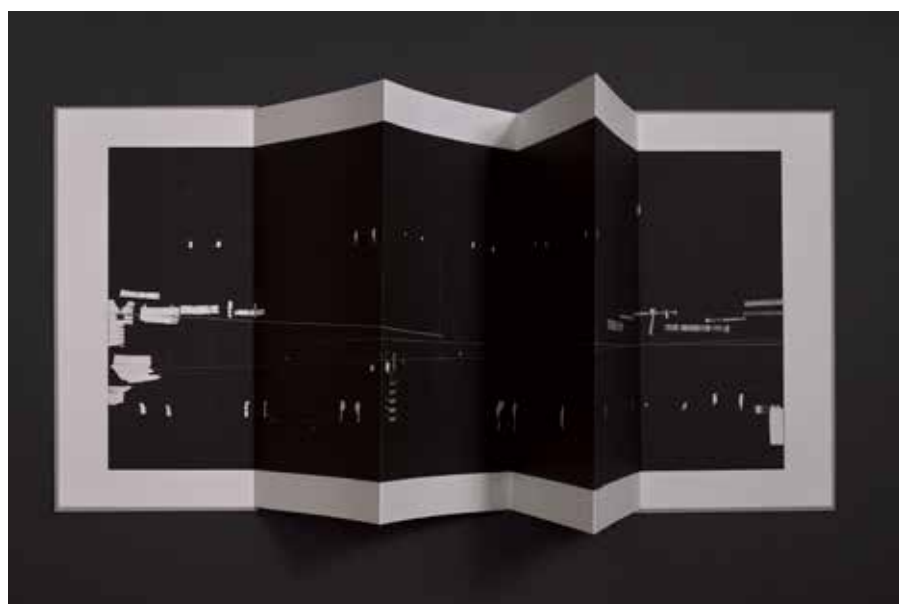
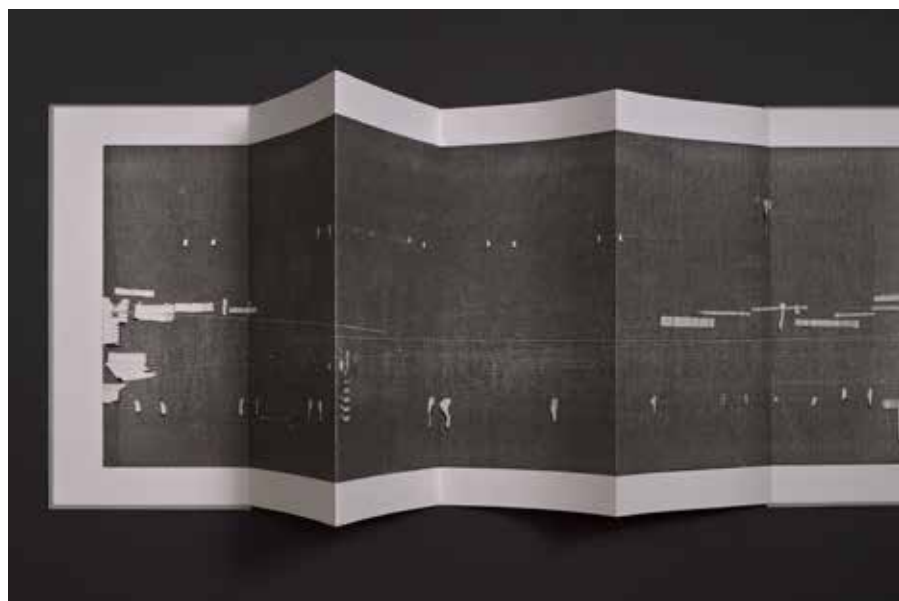
Her new series, *Woven Nights* (2025), displayed at Colomboscope, are a series of handmade concertina books with monotypes and their ghost prints, through variations of line, erasure and traces. She writes, "between absence and memory is a language of shifting details, traces and permutations. And written and erased with infinite variations. *Woven Nights* speaks to this language between absence and presence through a series of dark-field monotype prints and their

ghost impressions. Variations of line between darkness and light through a material absence. The monotypes and their ghost impressions are shared through the structure of a concertina book; nights that travel as waves across the folds of pages."

Between a Home and a Horizon (2025) is a text-based work exhibited alongside *Woven Nights*, which shares observations and events from a decade in the city of New Delhi. Drawing her way into writing, Shah's poetic words are haunting reminders of moments of resilience, fragility or erasure; of writing on a city undergoing significant social and political transformation. The text has also been translated into Sinhala and Tamil by writers Kaumadi Jayaweera and Saambavi Sivaji.

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026

Seher Shah
Woven Nights (I and II)
Monotype and ghost print handmade
concertina books on Somerset paper
Letterpress by The Brother in Elysium
and bound by Poncho Martinez
2025
Photo credits: Randhir Singh



Stephen Champion



For over three decades, Stephen Champion has been a pivotal voice in documenting Sri Lanka's complex history and its cartographies of conflict, sites of ritual, living heritage, and vernacular architecture. Having relocated to Sri Lanka from the United Kingdom in the 1980s, he has visually chronicled rural and urban spheres, everyday joys, hardships, and disruptions of people's lives. Champion's lens brings us closer to observing how trajectories of great political unrest and shades of social harmony become interlaced. His photographic works have been presented to audiences as two major archives, *Dharmadeepa* and *Colours of Change*, as well as self-published books *Lanka 1986–1992* (1993) and *Sri Lanka: War Stories* (2008).

The series of fourteen photographs on display at Colomboscope is an acoustic lexicon from his archive, bringing together technologies of sound, ritual encounters, processions, signs of upheaval, and depictions of everyday labour.

Focusing on different urban environments and rural landscapes of the island, this selection of colour and monochromatic photographs presents Sri Lanka's traditional dance and music forms, drumming, instrumental wisdom, ritualistic chants, street entertainers, political meetings, and loudspeaker music on buses and at street parties that keep citizens company during challenging periods of transition and crises. In certain images, stillness and silence are emblematic—a decommissioned military tank in Paranthan, and a light flare across an exposed reel of film.

Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka.

Stephen Champion
One man band, Kandy
Archival digital print from
original C type photograph
1987





Stephen Champion

Exorcism at Weligama

Archival digital print from original C type photograph
1988

Stephen Champion

Decommissioned Battle Tank, Paranthan

Archival digital print from original C type photograph
2010



Stephen Champion

Young man and his guitar, at Medawachchiya bus stand
Archival digital print from original C type photograph
2012



Tissa De Alwis



Since the 1980s, Colombo-based artist Tissa De Alwis has made miniature sculptures and scenographies using ceramic, plasticene, terracotta, and found objects. He describes these built worlds and object-based historiography as “Persian miniature in three dimensions.” De Alwis sets up vivid scenes as a chronicler and museologist of ancient and modern times: the Ceylonese army in full gear from the nineteenth-century, a Napoleonic battalion, aerial combat vessels, and even the iconic Elara-Dutugemunu battle from the ancient Anuradhapura kingdom of Sri Lanka. De Alwis’s wit and anecdotal storytelling is complemented by engaged study on the legacies of battles, warfare, and military operations. These figurative studies offer a meditation on the human condition and its propensity toward organized violence, while also opening new pathways to revisit civilizational stories.

The installation *Dhows* (2025) at Colomboscope brings together existing and new elements, illustrative of De Alwis’ aesthetics. He turns to a microcosm of dhows—traditional sailing vessels that have traversed the Indian Ocean over centuries. Routinely ferrying fresh produce, spices,

and silks among other merchandise through coastal routes of West Asia, the Persian Gulf, East Africa, Yemen, and South Asia from pre-colonial times to today, the dhow remains a symbol of maritime crossroads, where languages, ideas, trading cultures converge. De Alwis references iconic travellers such as the Moroccan explorer and scholar Ibn Battuta who visited Sri Lanka in the 1300s and lesser known voyagers of these island waters. He conjures an ensemble of sailors, merchants, explorers, and entertainers in motion across voyages of discovery, conquest, and diplomacy. De Alwis collaborates with Galle-based photographer Nayanahari Abeynayake to choreograph scenes with the dhow and its crew along the Galle Fort at the Lighthouse hotel. This backdrop is a reminder of the hybrid lineages that flow through Lanka—of memory spaces wrecked and salvaged as well as forecasts of monsoon currents.

*Commissioned by Colomboscope.
Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka*

Tissa De Alwis
Dhows

High fired terracotta, wood, cloth, copper
wire, thread, with crew in plasticine
2025

Images courtesy of the artist and
Nayanahari Abeynayake







Vivian Caccuri



Brazilian artist Vivian Caccuri explores sonic pathways as fields of pulsation, moving beyond acts of listening into corporeal dimensions of pleasure, technology, and movement. In particular she reflects on how bass and low frequency sound vibrates through the human body and becomes a connection force. She has collaborated with several musicians and composers across projects, reflecting on the architecture of sound, acoustic waves, various genres of music and non-human soundscapes.

Through installations, objects, performances, and original compositions, the artist constructs sensorial environments that recalibrate perception, question established codes in sound theory, and reconsider historical distinctions between noise, music, natural sounds, and silence, often addressing censorship and the unfolding legacies of colonial systems.

In the layering of textile as screen-like surfaces, Caccuri merges the subtle language of embroidery with shadow figures and vibration sequences that produce a moiré effect. In an interview for the Future Generation Art Prize in 2017, she states, “our bodies are

ninety percent liquids, and these fluids react to sound just like fire.” For *Colomboscope*, Caccuri shares two works from *Chahal* (2023), an installation series patterned with speakers and subwoofers as well as figurative subjects. For these dreamy sequences, the artist draws inspiration from parties thrown at her studio, and how these intersect with ritualistic scenes of social camaraderie. A thin mosquito net serves as the base for the artists’ surrealist imagination, turning the utilitarian fabric into an acoustic membrane connecting visual and aural images that recall tropical disease, dancing bodies, and environmental relations to sound.

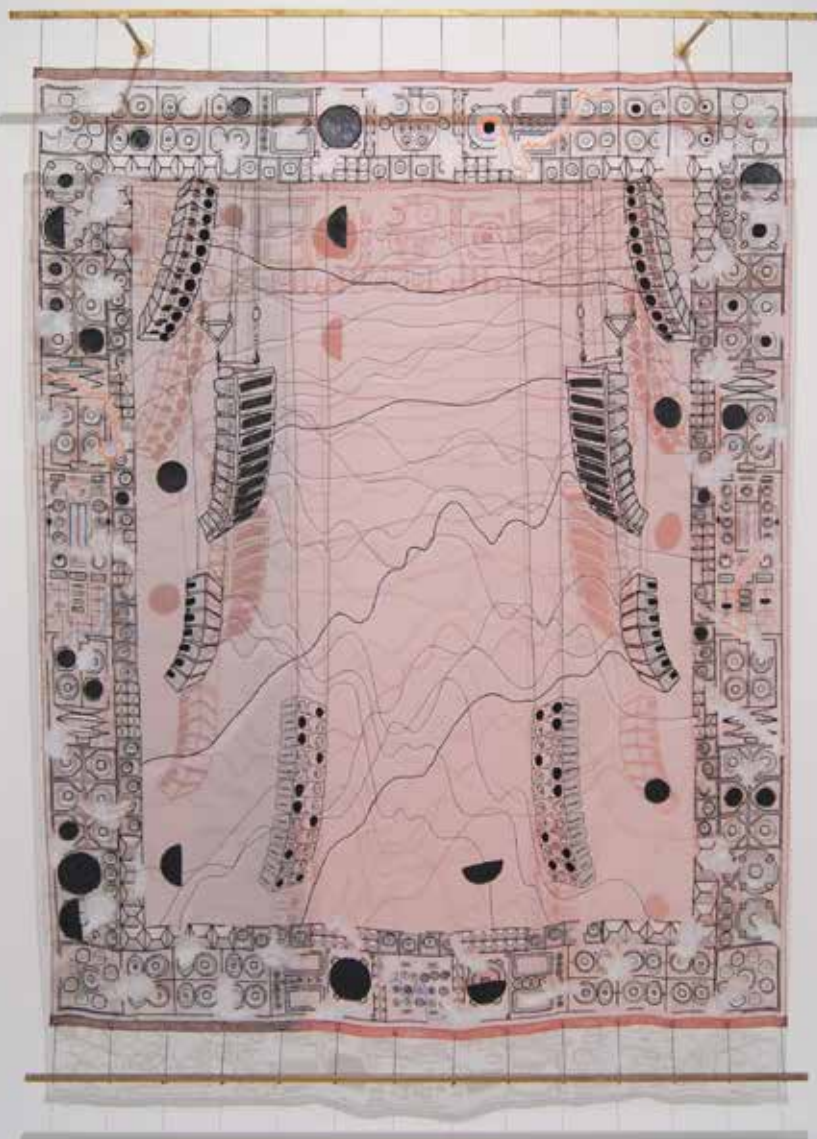
Supported by HUA International

Vivian Caccuri

Chahal Altar

Mosquito netting, waxed cotton, acrylic
paint, rubber and resin acrylic
2023

Image courtesy of HUA International



Soul Studio

Atiyyah Khan
Ayumi Paul
Gayan Hemarathne
Raven Chacon

Aural Improvisations

Soul Studio is a creative hub, vinyl library, and meeting point for architects and spatial thinkers conceived and built by the pioneering Sri Lankan architectural firm Palinda Kannangara Architects. Deploying sustainable building techniques including repurposed concrete blocks, the building is organized through a confluence of grid and circle forms. Natural ventilation is a primary characteristic, with material use emphasizing raw textures and organic forms that shape its circulation. The studio includes water pools and opens into a garden plot on the ground floor; the built structure's symmetrical volume sits in this surround of lush and cool microclimate within the busy suburban neighbourhood of Rajagiriya.

An acoustic composition draws out the tones of a gurgling river system, languid humming, and reverb of water wells. Artists map different modalities of the 'score' through hand-stitched and collective improvisation inviting visitors to attune inner and outer landscapes of sound. Textual experimentation and conceptual painting around Buddhist narratives explore principles of renunciation. Deep listening continues through dedicated sessions in the vinyl library as well as diving into a sonic archive of jazz, Afro-Asian diasporic production, and pioneering music created during apartheid and exile.





RHYTHM ALLIANCES

EXHIBITION VENUE

Atiyyah Khan



Atiyyah Khan is journalist, DJ, record collector, cratedigger and archivist from Johannesburg, based in Cape Town. Her love for music was nurtured through years of writing about South African sounds and learning through listening. She started collecting records more seriously when co-founding the music collective Future Nostalgia in 2013, with a few other music lovers, as a way to come together and listen. The collective is a platform to bring 'collectors, selectors, deejays, and diggers' together and has hosted events all over South Africa and internationally. In addition to writing and DJing, Khan has worked as a sound artist and toured extensively abroad with Zimbabwean choreographer Nora Chipaumire. Khan hosts radio shows, produces podcasts, sonic lectures and collaborative sound work.

Her zine-making includes Bismillah, which explores Islam, sufi philosophy and music in Africa. Her latest zine A Journey into the Sun (2025) is produced as part of the expansive As-Shams archival project and composed in collaboration with Graeme Arendse. Other elements on view at Rhythm Alliances include a mix of interviews and collage prints engaging the producer's legacy, South African Jazz pioneers, and the spatial politics of apartheid.

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by Arthx and TBA21—Academy.*



The artist in performance



Cover of African Day by Tete Mbambisa, released on As-shams records in 1976
Vinyl album cover
Image courtesy of As-Shams Archive



Cover of Black Lightning by Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim), released on As-shams records in 1979
Vinyl album cover
Image courtesy of As-Shams Archive

A Journey Into The Sun

This story begins in downtown Johannesburg. Its leading man is Rashid Vally, a visionary who against the harsh political climate of apartheid, created one the best jazz record labels in South Africa, As-Shams Records. He was a visionary, sharp businessman and also the owner of the popular Kohinoor record store. During the height of apartheid's oppression, he nurtured a racially inclusive home for culture and opened doors for numerous black musicians.

In tracing oceanic routes, the Vally family would have arrived as 'Passenger Indians' — free migrants who left India and set up different trading businesses around South Africa. Little documentation exists of South Asian history in South Africa before the 15th century. In 1488, the Portuguese rounded the Cape and mariner Bartolomeu Dias named the southern tip of the Cape peninsula Cabo das Tormentas (Cape of Storms) due to the wild seas. Later, Portuguese King John II renamed it Cabo da Boa Esperança (Cape of Good Hope), to entice others and encourage a trade route to India and the East.

More than a century later, in 1652, the Dutch East India Company colonised the Cape and many enslaved people were trafficked from South and South East Asia (including India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia). In 1860, across the country in the Natal region, the British brought many Indentured Labourers from parts of India to work on sugar plantations. However, separate to this, 'Passenger Indians' (traders, artisans and merchants primarily Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu speakers) arrived years later seeking a better life and established themselves in various parts of the country. When Apartheid was enforced in 1948, oppressive laws destroyed close-knit communities of Black, Indian and Coloured people, who had previously formed close bonds, by dividing them in every way possible.

by Atiyyah Khan

Ismail Vally owned a general dealer store called Azad Cafe on 11 Kort Street in the city. Aside from groceries, he also sold Indian music records at the shop. "He often allowed Qawwali singers like Suliman Patel to practice in the grocery store; the bags of sugar and flour acting as soundproofing," writes Matsuli Music's cofounder Matt Temple in the liner notes of Dick Khoza's *Chapita* reissue. His son Rashid was born in 1939 and grew up at the Champion Building on Market Street not far from the shop. He was one of 11 children. When he left high school in 1959, he started selling jazz LPs in his father's shop due to customer demand. He fell in love with jazz and would spend time listening to these records between delivering groceries by bicycle to customers. On Sundays, he spent afternoons listening to jazz sessions at Dorkay House — the only venue where black musicians could play — and he befriended musicians there.

Azad Cafe was then renamed Kohinoor ("mountain of light" in Persian) and became an iconic record store where Vally's inherited talent as a trader came in handy to promote the shop with taglines like: "We are not the cheapest in Africa, but in the world!" and that Kohinoor was the "Jazz capital of the world." And most exciting to customers "Remember: We have any record you need. If we don't, nobody does!"

This all happened against the backdrop of apartheid in the 60s and 70s with some of the harshest laws being passed, including racially segregated areas, banning of mixed-racial gatherings and marriages and several other laws that crushed any chance of normality. What Vally achieved in these times was unparalleled.

Kort street was iconic and its history is yet to be honoured. Next to Kohinoor, was a spice and incense shop called Begums, founded by Essack Vally Ahmed, which is still standing today and run by his son Zaheer. Next to that, with an upstairs floor, was the Indian restaurant Kapitan, owned by the Ranchod family, which Nelson Mandela regularly ate at as a young lawyer before being imprisoned. It is important for being one of the only restaurants in Jo'burg that served both black and white clientele during apartheid. Kohinoor was also one of the few multi-racial hang out spots. The street itself was revolutionary for this reason.

The shop was a family affair and many of Vally's nieces and nephews spent their weekends and school holidays working there. Recalling working in the shop, nephew Nazeer Mohamed paints a memory of his uncle's shop, "A typical day in downtown Johannesburg, as you're walking down Market Street, you hear this tenor saxophone blaring, and then you can get that smell. There was an incense shop next to Kohinoor, it was called Begums. And on a Saturday morning, you're hearing this tenor sax blasting away, you're getting the scents, cars are hooting loudly. Joburg was abuzz. That gave that part of the city a different kind of flavour."

For music lovers, Kohinoor became one of the most loved record stores in South Africa, and people flocked from all over the country to visit. It was a hub for writers, political figures, poets, and photographers to gather and form a community around—with Vally being at the centre of it. It resisted apartheid as one of the few places inclusive of different racial backgrounds, and many township and migrant workers were regulars at the store.

At his core, Vally was a true music fan — a music producer, label owner, and record store dealer. He carried an immense knowledge of music. During the sixties, he formed a label called Soultown Records and the first jazz LP he recorded was Gideon Nxumalo, entitled Early Mart. Following this he struck up a partnership with Abdullah Ibrahim (then Dollar Brand) which resulted in the recordings of a number of albums, including *Underground in Africa* which was issued on the Mandla label (which Vally said alluded to the freedom chant "Amandla" but was hidden for political reasons). The long-term relationship between Vally and Ibrahim was cemented through these recordings and lasted until his passing. The most iconic album from their partnership was the record *Mannenberg* is where it's happening, which was recorded in June 1974.

Around this time, Ibrahim coined the name As-Shams, meaning “The Sun” in Arabic, for the record label. Its iconic logo with its big red sun and “as-shams / The Sun” with the Arabic text in between, has become one of the most iconic and easily recognizable logos among vinyl enthusiasts today and was designed by Vally’s brother-in-law, the late Abdul Kader Ali.

Vally helped organise recording sessions for jazz musicians, allowing them freedom in the studio, producing those records, and then selling them in Kohinoor. That sense of freedom of expression, in the height of apartheid, is evident through the brilliant music released subsequently through the label, including albums by Tete Mbambisa, Black Disco, The Beaters / Harari, Kippie Moeketsi, Lionel Pillay, Basil “Manenberg” Coetzee, Pat Matshikiza and more. He also used striking album cover artworks made by black artists. Valley released roughly 50 records in the label’s heyday, but later put out more records in recent times like Sisonke Xonti’s uGaba the Migration (2020) and Bird Song Ensemble’s Imvuselelo (2020).

After dedicating his entire life to the shaping of jazz in South Africa, Vally retired. But to the delight of fans, the label was resuscitated with the help of music-enthusiast Calum MacNaughton from Sharp-Flat. He says, “He was reputed to be a tough businessman but I found him to be kind, engaging, and extremely generous with his time. He held a palpable spiritual grace, his knowledge of jazz was encyclopedic, and his enduring enthusiasm for South African jazz was infectious.” The pair devised the As-Shams Archive as a custodian organization for the label’s cultural history, availing the catalog to imprints abroad, dabbling in new artist releases and launching a series of in-house compilations and unreleased recordings.

Rashid Vally passed away on 7 December 2024. In tributes that poured in after his death, many praised his gentle, kind, and knowledgeable nature and shared beautiful memories of trips to his shop and their encounters with him. His nephew Mohamed says, “He was never one for fame and glory. He did what he did very passionately and loved what he did. I don’t think he even realized the contribution that he’s made.”

*Certain excerpts are drawn from Atiyyah Khan’s original article, ‘How Rashid Valley Showed Us the Way’, published on 17 December 2024 in *Africa Is a Country*.

MUSICIANS



AS-SHAMS الشمس THE SUN

RASHID VALLY



"In the early 70's, there was a big upsurge in local jazz music output. The normal record companies were not interested in jazz per say; they were only looking for hits. So when the local artists came to me, they had complete freedom to record whatever they wanted."

- Rashid Vally

"Rashid was amazing in the studio. He was like an executive producer; he would make suggestions if there was something he felt that needed to be corrected. But he would leave the musicians to do their own thing, he never interfered with the music. He was always excited about the music. Sometimes he would rock up there late or the family would also come to the studio and they would bring samoosas and treats. Everyone watched the recording. It was really fun with Rashid."

- Pops Mohamed



Rashid Vally in the studio with Pops Mohamed



The band performing in the studio. Rashid Vally is seated at the piano, and the other musicians are standing behind him.

Ayumi Paul



Flowing with the energy of water cycles, mountainous ecologies, and the kinesis of the cosmos vivifies Ayumi Paul's creative processes. She has evolved a fluid language of composing graphic scores, inviting collective song across museum and public spaces, as well as drawing with organic and found ingredients. Considering the human body as a tuning instrument intently porous to planetary rhythms, dreaming, and resounding with frequencies held across built terrains, she dwells equally on slow evolving civilizational time and the anticipated transition of seasons. Having academic training in music theory and the violin since a young age, Paul has sought release in observing and elaborating on methods of recitation, listening to and treating the voice as an ancestral source.

In the larger corpus *Constellations*, which comprises hand-stitched scores using golden and white threads on organic paper, the artist brings forth serendipitous readings from pilgrimages, geohistory, and astral phenomena. "Through these stitched scores, I map, chronicle, mend, and tune in. It is a practice in which time becomes song," she states.

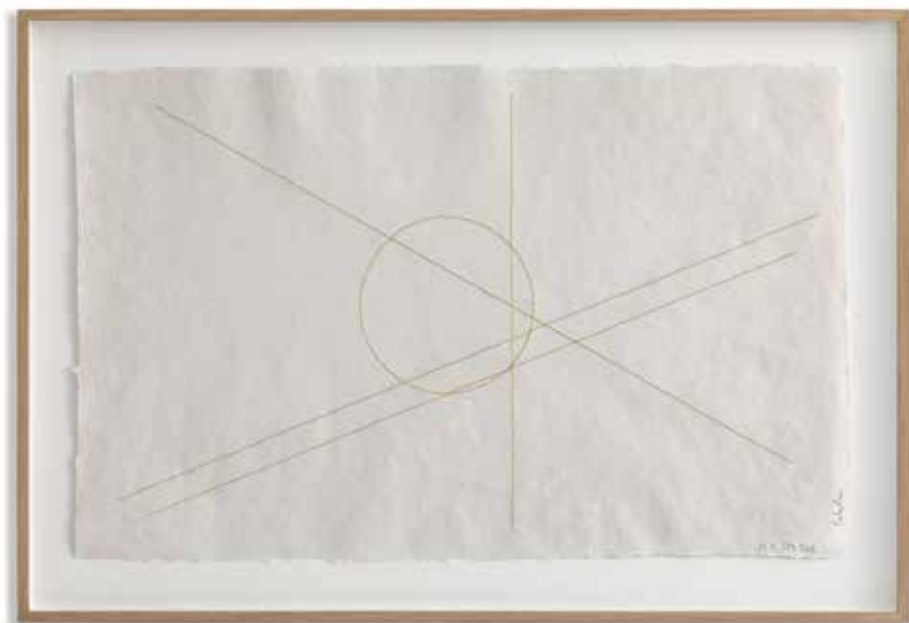
A set of new scores include *She who gives time*, 25.7.2626 (2025) emerges from a satellite image of the Mahaweli river basin and its tributaries emerging from the central hills in Sri Lanka. Another score, *Aydingköl (Moonlight Lake)* (2025) reflects a dried lake and saltpan which is considered as a sacred source by the Uyghur people.

The sound piece *There Is Always Sunrise (Source of River Kephissos)* (2024) is dedicated to guardians of aqueous underground infrastructures, recorded at an ancient well in Greece that feeds both the Kephissos River and the spring of Delphi. As meditation and oracular greeting, it entwines the movement of breath and water currents.

Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026 and Sharjah Art Foundation. Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka

Ayumi Paul
Constellations
2022

Image courtesy and copyright © Gropius Bau
Photo credits: Luca Giardini



Ayumi Paul
Constellations, 27.12.539 BCE Babylon
 Antique gold thread on paper
 2022
 Photo credits: Natalia Carstens



Gayan Hemarathne

Combining his practices of mechanical engineering, archaeology, and visual art, Gayan Hemarathne unearths forgotten narratives of Buddhist philosophy through artistic engagement with scripture. He creates visual notations of Buddhist scripture using Sinhala typography, the golden ratio, and geometric principles. For Hemarathne, gāthās have a rhythmic cadence which “not only aids memorisation but also evokes a profound emotional resonance, allowing the Dhamma to penetrate the mind.” Hemarathne’s works embrace Buddhism as a philosophical journey, indirectly critiquing the weaponisation of the religion’s principles to justify social divides, hunger for power, political nepotism, and corruption—realities that have become all too common in Sri Lanka.

This new series developed by Hemarathne for Colomboscope, responding to Soul Studio’s tranquil architecture, comprises paintings and sculptures inspired by the Buddhist principles of renunciation. The painting ‘Saranattha Mupēmi’, engages with the Chattamāṇavaka Gāthā, three stanzas students in Sri Lanka recite at the end of each school day, worshipping the three main aspects of the Buddha, Dhamma (philosophy), and Sangha

(monkhood). The painting ‘Narasīha’ presents Lord Buddha from the perspective of his wife, who was left behind with their child, for a life in search of enlightenment. The third painting refers to gāthās recited at a funeral, which concede that, “Just as rivers full of water fill the ocean full / Even so does what is given here benefit the dead.” Hemarathne’s sculpture, reminiscent of a monk’s alms bowl, uses a unique mathematical formula to typographically embed gāthās recited when a lay person enters novice monkhood. Finally, a sculpture offers a geometric study of the 37 requisites a monk needs to possess in their search for renunciation.

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026.
Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka*

Gayan Hemarathne
සරණන්වමුපේමි
Saranattha Mupēmi
Mixed Media on Canvas
2025

බැව් වළඟට තබාලා වහුපිණ
කණවුරේ භාග්‍යා ගාමිණීවතී
තාරිණිගා වළඟට තබාලා
ඟට කුමාරයා කටුකරාලා

රිගා වුරිගා වහුපිණ වහුපිණ
බව්වකරාලා වහුපිණ
වහුපිණට කුමාරයා කුමාරයා
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Uncanny Listening and Resonant Publics

To listen is to enter (into) relation—not as an act of reception but as a form of transformation. Listening, as Jean-Luc Nancy writes, “is to be open to resonance, to vibrate with what resounds.”¹ Yet resonance is never neutral or settled as such: it unsettles, leaks, and draws the listener into states of uncertainty and contact. If the thematic of Rhythm Alliances gestures toward the connective tissue of sound and relation, *uncanny listening* might describe the disposition that allows these alliances to form—a listening attuned to alterity, to opacity, to the thresholds where self and other become porous.

The uncanny, in this context, is the moment when the familiar becomes strange and the unfamiliar relatable through vibration. To listen uncannily is to hear one’s own position waver, to recognise that every voice carries ghosts—linguistic, historical, technological. The voice, though embodied, carries within it the breath of intergenerational memory, accents of migration, the grain of displacement. Every act of speech is a site of tension

between what can be owned and what escapes. The voice materialises the paradox between the public and the intimate. It is what we emit from within, but what immediately leaves us, circulates, becomes shared air. Mladen Dolar’s notion of the voice as *the leftover of the signifier*—a surplus that is neither purely meaning nor mere noise—is crucial here. Voice, for Dolar, binds us to the symbolic but also exceeds it; it is both the condition and the remainder of language.² The uncanny arises when that excess becomes audible—when the voice is heard not as expression of identity but as resonance without a fixed subject. Listening, in turn, becomes an ethics of this circulation—a way of remaining porous to what Nancy calls the resonance of the world, that is, the way the world itself listens back.

In Sylvia Mieszkowski’s *Resonant Alterities*, we find a deepening of this inquiry through reading resonances in literary instances not as harmony but as a site of anxiety and desire.³ Resonance, for her, signals an affective vibration between bodies that never fully stabilises; it is

1. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening* (Fordham University Press, 2007)

2. Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (MIT Press, 2006)

3. Sylvia Mieszkowski, *Resonant Alterities: Sound, Desire and Anxiety in Non-Realist Fiction* (Bloomsbury, 2023)

by Suvani Suri

an erotic as well as a political relation. If uncanny listening begins in this unstable zone, it is because listening is never without friction: we do not simply encounter the other; we are slightly undone by the contact.

When this line of thought is extended to the field and structure of rhythm, it starts to appear as a negotiation between forces—a pattern that emerges from collision, from the uneven temporalities of living and sounding together. Nina Sun Eidsheim, in *The Race of Sound*, argues that sonic difference is not only cultural but also material: sound propagates through bodies, spaces, and technologies that are themselves racialised and historically uneven.⁴ The ear, far from universal, is trained within systems of power. To listen uncannily is to become aware of the asymmetries that shape audibility—to ask who gets to sound, who is listened to, and under what conditions resonance is allowed.

Cosmologies of Listening Practices

This theoretical listening finds grounding in diverse sonic practices where the act of hearing itself becomes world-making. In the Yoruba naming ritual (*isímọ orúkọ*), the infant is brought into the community through a chorus of voices that tests and affirms the name. Sound is not representation but transmission—an ontological rhythm connecting person, lineage, and environment. Similarly, in Maori *tāonga pūoro*, carved instruments invite the participation of wind and ancestor; one does not perform sound but becomes host to its passage. These practices articulate a listening that recognises the voice as beyond-human, as vibration entangled with land, weather, and spirit.

4. Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound* (Duke University Press, 2019)

In contemporary practice, this relational listening reverberates in the work of artists such as Raven Chacon and KMRU. Chacon's compositions and performances emerge from the resonant politics of land and silence. The piece *Report* (2016), written for an ensemble of firearms, renders audible the violence of the American soundscape, yet beneath its explosive gestures lies a quieter provocation: who listens to whom, and at what cost? His field recordings in the Navajo Nation translate environmental stillness into sonic endurance, where the absence of sound is not emptiness but withheld presence.

In relation and through contrast, KMRU's expansive field recordings and ambient works transform the city into an organism of breath and hum. His compositions such as *Peel* (2020) or *Diffusion* (2022) create spaces of suspended listening where mechanical and human rhythms overlap without hierarchy. What might seem ambient becomes political in its refusal of speed and clarity; his listening practice reclaims urban noise as relational atmosphere. Both Chacon and KMRU invite an uncanny awareness: we hear the infrastructures of our own listening—microphones, ears, cities—vibrating with histories of power and erasure. If uncanny listening marks a threshold where resonance unsettles the limits of identity and representation, Vivian Caccuri's mosquito-sonic cosmology offers another critical horizon: listening as contagion, listening as atmospheric intimacy. In *Mosquito Shrine I* (2019) and her continuing long-term investigations

into mosquito acoustics and colonial sound, Caccuri positions the mosquito not as pest but as agent of vibrational politics—a carrier of frequencies that pierce skin, transmit disease, and disturb sleep.

Where the ear of Western modernity historically operated through distance, through clarity and separation, Caccuri reminds us that some acoustics arrive through intrusion. The mosquito's whine is not merely a warning or irritant; it is a sonic architecture of forced intimacy and involuntary resonance. It vibrates against skin, near bone, at the threshold of perception. It refuses the fantasy of sovereign listening.

A mosquito tone in the room produces a listening that is compulsive, anxious, embodied—the ear becomes paranoid, scanning for threat. Sylvia Mieszkowski's attention to sonic anxiety finds a material analogue here. Resonant alterity is not metaphorical; it punctures. It bites. It circulates. And yet, in Caccuri's installations, the mosquito becomes more than a hostile acoustic. It becomes a carrier of memory, a reminder that sound has always been tied to empire, labour, environmental extraction, and the forced circulation of bodies. Mosquito frequencies map the paths of colonial trade and plantation ecologies; they sonify the biopolitics of sugar and humidity, of fever and migration. They remind us that listening unfolds in a world shaped by climate, disease, and uneven vulnerability.

Thus, uncanny listening is not merely spectral or philosophical. It is mosquito-level, humidity-level, body-heat-level: a listening that acknowledges how sound infiltrates and unsettles, how the sonic world is full not only of voices but also of vibrational parasites, allies, irritants, and ghosts. Chacon's silence is structural. KMRU's drone is atmospheric. Caccuri's mosquito is tactile and affective, dragging the ear back into the body—into sweat, into sleep-cycle disturbance, into tropical night.

If we follow the way of these artists, thinking through resonance and silence, uncanny listening becomes a gathering of epistemologies of sound through practice, a lexicon of acoustemologies. This is rhythm as alliance, not necessarily a harmony, but a syncopation of ideas. To listen is to be vulnerable; to be sounded is to be materially altered; to resonate is to risk contamination.

In this sense, *Rhythm Alliances* can be imagined as a field of resonant publics: assemblies that do not strive for harmony but for shared vibration and a syncopation of ideas. Such gatherings might resemble Chacon's collective silences, KMRU's suspended ambiances, or the untranslatable hums of communal spaces where to listen is to be vulnerable; to be sounded is to be materially altered; to resonate is to risk contamination.

Uncanny listening invites us to inhabit these spaces as ethical experiments and experiences, to approach sound as a relational field, for rhythm to hold difference without dissolving it.

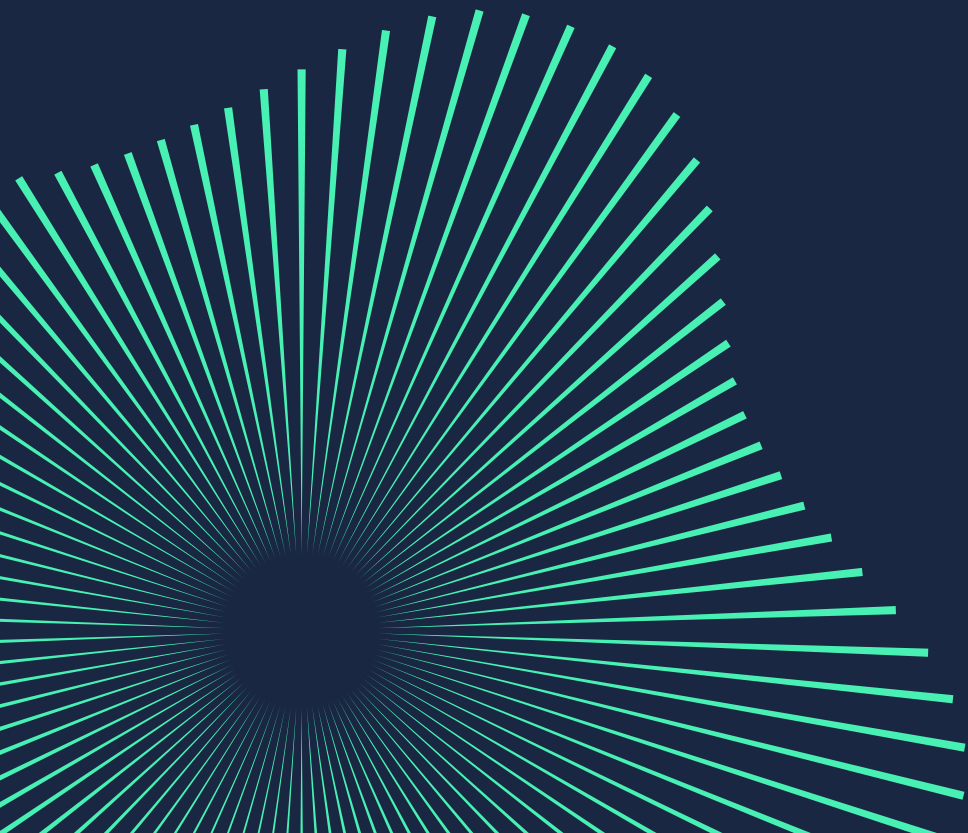
Artworks referred to:

Raven Chacon, *Report* (2016) and sound works in *Voiceless Mass* (2022)

KMRU, *Peel* (2020), *Diffusion* (2022)

Vivian Caccuri, *Mosquito Shrine* series (2019 to ongoing)

echoes and reverbs



COLLABORATORS

Arka Kinari / Bread Modular / Rhythm Kino
(Hind Meddeb, Mladen Kovacevic, Sameer Farooq, Ursula Engel, Kehelmala Studios) / Chitrasena Dance Company
& reVerb Collective / CoCA Symbiosis / Dizzi Geetha Houïda / Kahli / Mawongany / P. Ahilan / Perera Elsewhere
Reappropriation Riddims (Asvajit, Divanke Sewmin, Mike de Silva, Nigel Perera, Sebastiampillai Vasanberk, Uvindu Perera)
Sumudi Suraweera and Susantha Rupathilaka with band
Sumugan Sivanesan / Sunara / Melodies in My Head
(Thomas Burkhalter and Daniel Jakob)
TBA21–Academy Convening (Brook Andrew [BLAK C.O.R.E], Neelima Jaychandran and Daniel Fernando (Blue Resources Trust), Anna Arabindan Kesson, Eduardo Castillo-Vinuesa, KMRU, Laleh Khalili, Naiza Khan, Hajra Haider Karrar, Setareh Noorani, Charwei Tsai, Markus Reymann, and Small Cat Advocacy and Research) / Noon / Wael Sami Elkholy
Weathering Grounds (led by MeshGround developed in collaboration with ClimArts and Alleyne Dance)
Weather Reports (Imaad Majeed, Mayun Kaluthantri, Tashyana Handy, Dinoj M, SajaS, Toulip Wonder, Suren Seneviratne, Kavitha Balasingham, Ushara and Seth De Silva)

Thursday 22 January

3.00 pm – 3.30 pm

Curated Walk with Natasha Ginwala
at Soul Studio

3.30 pm – 4.00 pm

All Eyes Hear by Ayumi Paul
Performance at Soul Studio

In conjunction with her *Constellations* on view at Soul Studio, Ayumi Paul will offer insight into her methods of listening and composing—approaches that move beyond the acoustically perceptible and engage more subtle forms of resonance and attention. Grounded in her long-standing study of the capacity of all life forms to connect through sound, she has developed vocal practices that can be applied both in ceremonial contexts and in daily life. She will introduce selected exercises, and the gathering will conclude with a collective sound offering, inviting the audience to take part.

4.00 pm – 5.30 pm

As-Shams: A Journey Into the Sun
by Atiyyah Khan
Listening Session at Soul Studio

As part of her ongoing sonic research tracing South African jazz histories, their creation and dissemination across the country and beyond, Atiyyah Khan will present a listening session on As-Shams ('The Sun'), the South African jazz label and its founder, Rashid Vally, whose work defied apartheid through sound, collaboration, and cultural exchange.

The session will examine how As-Shams emerged in the 1970s as the first South African label dedicated to Afrasian music, operating within severe restrictions on artistic production and interracial interaction. By contextualising As Shams within a vibrant jazz era shaped by an Indian immigrant community navigating apartheid's spatial and social boundaries, the session will highlight how listening and sounding functioned as political acts.

Limited capacity. Registration needed.

5.00 pm – 5.30 pm

Curated Walk with Hajra Haider Karrar
at Radicle Gallery

6.00 pm – 7.00 pm

F 'N' F (Face and Fingers) by Moe Satt
Performance at Radicle Gallery

Moe Satt is a Burmese visual and performance artist who explores identity, embodiment, and political resistance through his body as both subject and medium. His ongoing exploration of hand and facial gestures transforms anatomy into a language of quiet defiance, entangling tradition and empathy where movement becomes both expression and resistance. In this collaborative and participatory format, he will extend his embodied vocabulary with Sri Lankan performers Sangarappillai Priyasaravanan and Sneha Deshapriya.

Supported by Mondriaan Fonds and The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Thursday 22 January

7.00 pm – 8.00 pm

Reverberations of The Song of Ceylon

Live Music & Film Screening at Rio Complex

A reimagined musical score for *The Song of Ceylon* (1934), Basil Wright's landmark documentary, this live performance at the Rio Cinema sets contemporary electronic music against the film's meticulously composed colonial gaze, placing modern sound in direct tension with images of early 20th-Century Ceylon: Kandyan drumming and dance by N. Ukkuva and R.W.G. Surambe, railway lines carving through mountains, plantation labour, coastal livelihoods, and cycles of ritual and festivity. Electronic musicians Asvajit Boyle and Nigel Perera, alongside several other musicians, respond to these scenes with a newly composed sonic landscape—one that resists illustration and instead introduces hints of friction, dissonance, and temporal rupture. Originally produced by John Grierson under the patronage of the Ceylon Tea Board, the film stands as a carefully constructed artefact of imperial observation and mercantile ambition. Nearly 90 years on, Walter Leigh's original score is displaced by contemporary electronic sound, allowing the images to be unsettled, re-read, and haunted—opening space for post-colonial reflection, sonic intervention, and the reclamation of presence.

8.00 pm – 9.00 pm

Noon Concert

Live Music & Film Screening at Rio Complex

Noon led by musician, performer and educator Nuwan Gunawardhana initially formed as Neo Papara Collective, expanding Papara through new ideas and techniques while integrating compositional and performance tools from music genres ranging from jazz, big band to folk traditions. Papara (also known as Papare, Molam or Kawadi) is a popular Sri Lankan music genre shaped as a blend of South Indian, Portuguese, Dutch and British historical influences and characterized by the vibrant use of brass and percussion instruments. Summoning an atmosphere of energy, jubilation, and ceremony, Papara is frequently performed at sports events, weddings and religious processions. Nuwan's research and musical alliances with a range of bandmates and artists unleash a bold and celebratory act that enlivens this legacy genre in fresh directions.

Friday 23 January

10.00 am – 11.00 am

Curated Walk with Hajra Haider Karrar
at Colpetty Town House

4.00 pm – 5.00 pm

**Daira by Sarah Kazmi, Mariama Ndure,
and Nuwan Gunawardhana**
Performance at Colpetty Town House

The performance will activate the installation “Lisan-ul-Haq” (Tongue of Truth), drawing on the concepts of recipe, wonderment, and offering, weaving together celestial metaphors, shared rituals, and oral traditions passed down through forebears across three geographical terrains: Pakistan, Gambia, and Sri Lanka. Performed in multiple languages, it will explore the symbolic significance of the circle central to various spiritual ideologies and devotional practices, as both form and method. The experience will unfold through a circular rhythm of listening, layered and textured with organic food morsels, water, and instruments that serve both as vessels for the material and sonic, as well as physical and spiritual nourishment. All elements will be looped live, including oral recitation of recipes inherited from our mothers, resonant tones of instruments such as the kalabash and the conch shell, and text that moves between poetry and prose. Together, they create a multisensory, meditative score that blurs the boundaries between voice, ritual, memory, and the act of offering.

11.00 am – 11.30 pm

Curated Walk with Natasha Ginwala
at Barefoot Gallery

5.00 pm – 6.00 pm

Curated Walk with Pramodha Weerasekera
at Radicle Gallery

6.00 pm – 6.15 pm

**lahgo adil'i dine doo yeehosinilgii
yidaaghi by Raven Chacon**
performed by Musicmatters Ensemble
Live Concert at Musicmatters Soundroom

Raven Chacon's composition piece is inspired by experimental composer Cornelius Cardew's Treatise, but more so by Navajo and Pueblo iconographies, particularly the ancient petroglyphs carved in the volcanic rock on the west side of Albuquerque. It equally challenges listener expectations while inviting subjective forms of reading and interpretation by a group of musicians. An award-winning Indigenous composer and artist, Chacon activates Indigenous symbols and a Navajo title as an act of liberation, expansion and dissidence.

Friday 23 January

6.15 pm – 7.00 pm

Stuttering Music by Yara Asmar

Live Music at Musicmatters Soundroom

Stuttering music is a live performance by Yara Asmar, a musician and artist who creates unique compositions using broken instruments, field recordings and deconstructed music boxes to sculpt delicate and enchanting lo-fi compositions. Rooted in her ongoing exploration of the social and acoustic legacies of Beirut, the performance delves into sound and memory through improvised electro-acoustic music for accordion and metallophone. Named after her third album, *Stuttering Music*, Asmar's work responds to her home city and unfolds through her resonant approach to contemporary experimental music.

6.30 pm – 8.00 pm

Artist Encounters: Basir Mahmood, Dinar Sultana, Nina Mangalanayagam, and Seher Shah

Moderated by Hajra Haider Karrar

at Barefoot Gallery

This session foregrounds the ongoing arc of artistic thinking and research shaping new creative projects in Rhythm Alliances. Artists Basir Mahmood, Dinar Sultana, Nina Mangalanayagam, and Seher Shah share distinct approaches to cinematic storytelling, personal historiography, literary inspirations and embodied vocabularies, emerging from different regions of South Asia and its diaspora.

8.30 pm – 9.30 pm

Harbour Performance

at Arka Kinari

Subversive, immersive, and partially submerged, Arka Kinari transforms into a floating stage for a bespoke multimedia performance by Filastine & Nova, using music to sound the alarm for the climate crisis and cinematic visuals to imagine a post-carbon future. A strange ship has appeared on the waterfront, painted in evocative patterns, streaked with rust, and battered by storms. It came from a distant island somewhere in the Indo-Pacific, a place where rising seas have already made life on land impossible. As the sun dips below the horizon, a lone figure sings out to gather a crew and begin a voyage. Expressed through an otherworldly musical mix of traditional Javanese melodies, hypnotic polyrhythms and contemporary electronic beats by the musicians Filastine & Nova, Arka Kinari is at once peaceful and urgent, meditative yet menacing. It stands as both a warning of the coming storm and an invitation to sail into an alternative future. The Arka Kinari performance has been shared among audiences in the ports of more than 25 countries, from prestigious international festivals to remote stilt villages. Tonight, their performance marks the first engagement of Colomboscope with the contested extension to Colombo: Port City.

Saturday 24 January

10.00 am – 11.00 am

Curated Walk with Pramodha Weerasekera and Ricarda Hommann
at Colpetty Town House

11.00 am – 12.00 pm

Curated Walk with Natasha Ginwala accompanied by artist Pinaree Sanpitak
at Barefoot Gallery

This conversation and special tour will focus on the pioneering Thai artist Pinaree Sanpitak, addressing elements of her conceptual practice as well as how it touches on communal labour and aesthetics of the hand-made, spiritual genealogies, hospitality, and Pan-Asian feminist philosophy.

10.00 am – 11:30 am

Laboratory of Sustainability 1
Workshop at Arka Kinari

A ship is the world in a microcosmos. But how can we sustain life in a tiny floating world? For the Laboratory of Sustainability and the Sea, visitors are welcomed on a guided tour onboard Arka Kinari to peek behind the curtain. Together with the crew, visitors will learn how Arka Kinari travels on the wind, makes electricity from the sun, desalinates water, manages food, and reduces waste. Some of these solutions can be scaled up for life on spaceship Earth. In fact, the future demands it.

Limited capacity. Registration needed.

12.30 pm – 2.00 pm

Reception and Exhibition Tour, Plucking the Stars I நட்சத்திரங்களை பறித்தல் **with Arulraj Ulaganathan**
Partner Event at Curado Art Space

This solo exhibition by Arulraj Ulaganathan evolves new suites of artistic work engaging with biographical and social narratives around colonial legacies of the hill country, economic and ecological extractivism evidenced in daily experiences of plantation labour across tea estates. The artist hones in on communal perspectives of Malaiyaha Tamils through kin and neighbours, visualizes historical and current encounters of political neglect, suspended belonging, and dispossession. The tea plant is treated as material and symbolic capital networked into generational experience, forced movement, global trade and national power. Driven through emotional cartography, record keeping, and a surrealist space of drawing, Arulraj expands from his earlier series exhibited at the eighth edition of Colomboscope, Way of the Forest.

3.00 pm – 3.30 pm

Curated Walk with Hajra Haider Karrar
at Radicle Gallery

4.00 pm – 5.30 pm

Laboratory of Sustainability 2
Workshop at Arka Kinari

Limited capacity. Registration needed.

Saturday 24 January

4:00 pm – 7:00 pm

**Satellite Sick/ Returning Sounds:
Spoken Word Poetry Workshop with
Tashyana Handy and Sakina Aliakbar**
at Radicle Gallery

In this workshop, participants will explore how language moves through the body, breaking apart, reshaping, and returning as sound with Handy and Aliakbar. Paying close attention to sensory detail and collaborative experimentation, the session will encourage writing from instinct, discovering subtle frequencies, textures, and interruptions that shape how we read, speak, and hear. Together, everyone will experiment with performance and the art of shaping spoken work. This workshop is open to anyone curious about the intersections of language, the body, and sound, and to those eager to explore the many ways a poem can come into being.

**Limited capacity. Registration needed.
No previous experience in writing or public
speaking needed.**

4.00 pm

Echoes of the Kankariya
Live Music at Musicmatters Soundroom

Leading percussionist, music educator and ethnomusicologist Sumudi Suraweera with master musician Susantha Rupathilaka enter a new chapter of enduring innovative study and music composition inspired by the Kohomba Kankariya ritual performed to invoke devotional blessings and protection from deities, originating in the Kandyan Kingdom. This new live act will incorporate contemporary elements influenced by jazz, electro-acoustic sonic textures, and multi-instrumental improvisation woven together with traditional Sri Lankan harmonics.

5.30 pm

Dum, Tak, Tak, Dum, Tak, S
by Imaad Majeed
Performance at Rio Complex

In *Dum, Tak, Tak, Dum, Tak, S* Imaad Majeed turns to the percussive heart of Sri Lanka's Sufi traditions. Drawing from a growing archive of devotional recordings as part of the KANNOORU project, the performance listens closely to the drums that carry these lineages: the daf or tambourine among the Rifai, the darbuka among the Naqshbandhi, and the tabla among the Muflitheen. Informed by conversations with Sufi practitioners, Majeed explores how each instrument shapes distinct rhythmic sensibilities of devotion. The performance reconsiders the archive not as a static repository, but as a living percussive field: one that continues to move, vibrate, and rupture. Majeed invites us to listen closely to the archive and its reinterpretation, tracing how devotion and electronic music technology can find common time.

7:00 pm – 8.30 pm

**Artist Encounters with Kaimurai,
Sabeen Omar, Jovita Alvares, and Mekh
Limbu with Priyankar Chand**
Moderated by Pramodha Weerasekera
at Barefoot Gallery

This session foregrounds the artistic thinking and research shaping new creative projects in Rhythm Alliances. Artists Kaimurai (Abishek Ganesh Jayashree), Sabeen Omar, Jovita Alvares, and Mekh Limbu with Priyankar Chand speak to Pramodha Weerasekera about their aesthetic methods, cultural approaches to kinship and familial memory as well as Indigenous activism. Each artist develops a personal take on acoustic and textile elements in their artworks, conceiving sensory environments and shared experiences.

Saturday 24 January

7.30 pm

Melodies in My Head:

Thomas Burkhalter and Daniel Jakob

Live Performance at Rio Complex

Melodies In My Head tells stories of what it means to be an artist today, through an intriguing and emotionally charged experimental format. This 60-minute audiovisual journey evokes joy, anger, trauma and doubt—offering both an emotional escape and a raw confrontation with the pressing truths of our time. Formed by anthropologist and audiovisual performer Thomas Burkhalter (founder of Norient) and musician/producer Daniel Jakob (Dubokaj, Dejoj, Filewile), the duo dives into the lived and imagined experiences of artists from Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Switzerland. Some lyrics stem from 15 years of ethnographic interviews, others from fictional characters. The sound blends pop, underground club music, kitsch, and trash.

Supported by Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia

Sunday 25 January

10.00 am – 10.30 am

Curated Walk with Pramodha Weerasekera

at Colpetty Town House

11.00 pm – 5.00 pm

Marine Intersections & Coastlines as Webs

*Convening, dialogues, performance
workshop and walk at Radicle Gallery*

Organized by TBA21 and Colomboscope as part of 'The Current V: Ancestral Ocean' an initiative by TBA21-Academy, curated by Natasha Ginwala

The inaugural convening of The Current V: Ancestral Ocean is a coming together of artists, Indian Ocean thinkers, as well as conservationists, dynamically engaged in the historical crossings, Afrasian cultural confluences and maritime stories formed and held in these waters. The Current V: Ancestral Ocean is set to cultivate site-responsive artistic and conservation practices across island and coastal nodes, fostering situated learning and creative exchange. Supporting engagements within culturally rooted contexts that encourage slow, conscious mobility and deep listening, the programme aims to cultivate long-term relationships across the Indian Ocean basin, expanding TBA21's long-standing commitment to pan-oceanic alliances.

For the full programme between 25–27 January at venues Radicle Gallery, MusicMatters, Soul Studio and other sites, check the Colomboscope website or TBA21 via this QR code:



Sunday 25 January

1.00 pm - 2:00 pm

**Curated Walk with Ricarda Hommann
and Mandira Ranatunga**

at Radicle Gallery

11.00 am - 11.30 am

All Eyes Hear by Ayumi Paul

Performance at Soul Studio

In conjunction with her *Constellations* on view at Soul Studio, Ayumi Paul will offer insight into her methods of listening and composing—approaches that move beyond the acoustically perceptible and engage more subtle forms of resonance and attention. Grounded in her long-standing study of the capacity of all life forms to connect through sound, she has developed vocal practices that can be applied in ceremonial contexts as well as in daily life. She will introduce selected exercises, and the gathering will conclude with a collective sound offering, inviting the audience to participate.

Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka

11.30 am - 1.00 pm

Laut Loud by Arka Kinari

Listening Session at Arka Kinari

On each sailing season, the crew of Arka Kinari collaborates with local curators and filmmakers to archive rare and disappearing musics and music-driven rituals from barely charted ports across the Nusantara archipelago. Ranging from politically-controversial traditional dances to avant-garde underground raves, they reposition these sounds on performances atop the sea and amplify hyper-local expressions of sound in a free online archive. Enter the vinyl library of Soul Studio, a space designed for listening, and let Laut Loud curator Raka Ibrahim take you on a sonic journey along coastal communities of the archipelagos.

Limited capacity. Registration needed.

Supported by Goethe-Institut

5.00 pm - 6.00 pm

Guided Tour by Sign Network LK

at Colpetty Town House

Join the team members of Colomboscope's long-term collaborators, Sign Network LK, an organisation fostering awareness, understanding, and supporting individuals with hearing impairments. In this tour, the network members will use sign language to describe and engage with the artistic projects and ideas on view.

Sunday 25 January

4.00 pm – 5.30 pm

Pirate Strategies: Reclaiming Our World with Grey Filasteen, Nova Ruth, initiators of the Arka Kinari, Thomas Burkhalter, founder of the decolonial music network Norient, and Asvajit Boyle

Moderated by Sumugan Sivanesan
Conversation at Rio Complex

A conversation between Grey Filasteen, Nova Ruth, initiators of the Arka Kinari, Thomas Burkhalter, founder of the decolonial music network Norient, and Asvajit Boyle, the driving force behind Pettah Interchange and SNAFU among other initiatives, about tips and tricks on how to redefine the norms of festival making, touring, music production and living.

Limited capacity. Registration needed.

Supported by Goethe-Institut Sri Lanka and the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia

9.00 pm

Just Wanna Live Some by Perera Elsewhere

Live Music Act at Liberty by Scope Cinemas

Perera Elsewhere (aka Sasha Perera) is a Berlin-based, UK-raised, Sri Lankan-rooted electronic artist, producer, DJ, lyricist, and trumpeter known for a genre-defying sound spanning experimental pop, dub, rap, and her self-described “doom folk”. Her 2025 album *Just Wanna Live Some* balances raw emotion, poetic lyricism, and bass-driven atmospheres. Despite her anti-genre approach, her music remains deeply human. In 2011, she first performed in Sri Lanka with Jahcoozi, presented by the Goethe-Institut and Bang Bang, in a legendary Mount Lavinia beach concert during a cyclonic storm. Fifteen years later, she returns for a cinematic live experience at Liberty Cinema.

Supported by Goethe-Institut

Monday 26 January

3.00 pm – 5.00 pm

Rotations of Bismillah by Atiyyah Khan
Listening Session/Workshop at Soul Studio

A part-listening session, part-workshop around the creation of ‘Bismillah’, an award-winning 2019 zine created by South African sound scholar and DJ Atiyyah Khan, accompanied and inspired by Sufi sonics, field recordings, and library records from Africa. This workshop will include a breakdown of DIY methods behind the creation of the zine, using sound and visual materials. It will also reflect on her ongoing research of Islamic practices in Africa, where music has been an integral part of rituals and spiritual cosmology; examining colonial legacies of field recordings, understanding digging as an archival practice, but also visually decentralising what we mean when we speak of the continent by embracing oceanic and acoustic currents.

Listen to this mix via the QR code for the best experience of the event:



Within the framework of Marine Intersections and Coastlines as Webs Convening organised by TBA21-Academy and Colomboscope as part of Current V: Ancestral Ocean

Limited capacity. Registration needed.

Monday 26 January

6 pm – 7 pm
L25 by KMRU

Performance at Musicmatters Soundroom

L25 functions as an études of space and time. It is a speculative sonic journal of social architectures and environments transversed throughout 2025 from Indian Ocean archipelagos to Highlands in Oceania and beyond. The performance unfolds between live improvisation, modulating textures, drone and field recordings. Sonic passages here are arguably abstracted in ways that exceed a mode of representation that cannot be grasped immediately; as a wilful tool for obscurity.

Within the framework of Marine Intersections and Coastlines as Webs Convening organised by TBA21-Academy and Colomboscope as part of Current V: Ancestral Ocean

8.00 pm – 9.00 pm
**My Sound My Journey
by Wael Sami Elkholy**

Performance at Musicmatters Soundroom

Wael Sami Elkholy is a composer, singer and performer. His work reflects a personal journey of awakening and cross-border movement, unfolding through oud, voice and electronic sound. In his oeuvre, tonalities range from melancholic to rebellious, shaped by diverse tonal worlds and rhythmic sensibilities rooted in wide-ranging cultural influences. Through an interplay of composed and improvised elements, his performances plot immersive sonic narratives exploring identity, movement, and transformation.

Supported by the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia.

9.30 pm – 11 pm
Rhythm Kino

Film Screening at Liberty by Scope Cinemas

Sudan, Remember Us (2025)
Directed and written by Hind Meddeb
2025 | 78 mins | English, Arabic

Sudan, Remember Us portrays a young generation of Sudanese who turned poetry into revolution. Through words, chants, and dreams, they rose against decades of dictatorship, confronting a corrupt military and militias guilty of war crimes. The film combines personal stories with the urgency of a country in turmoil, capturing moments of a poetic revolution where imagination becomes resistance and freedom begins with the power of the voice.

Tuesday 27 January

10 am – 11.30 am and 4.00 pm – 5.30 pm

Laboratory of Sustainability 3

Workshop at Arka Kinari

Limited capacity. Registration needed.

5.00 pm – 6.00 pm

Observing Omens Drawn by Lightning by Zarina Muhammad

Performance at Barefoot Gallery

Observing Omens Drawn by Lightning is a new, iterative live work unfolding through breath, sound, gesture, and mythic embodiment. Rooted in shared fieldwork and reciprocal making, the performance centres on the co-creation of masks as spirit interfaces, as objects that mediate between human and elemental, ancestral and ecological worlds. Drawing from healing and protective traditions, these masks will emerge through collective experimentation rather than formal choreography. The performance will take place adjacent to Muhammad's installation, offering a quiet terrain of rest and resonance, a space composed of scent bowls, textiles, sound-producing objects, and ephemeral materials that shift and respond over time.

Muhammad will be joined by collaborators Hanaa Cassim, Malith Upendra, Sarita Abeyundere, and Sneha Deshapriya.

6.00 pm – 6.30 pm

Curated Walk with Hajra Haider Karrar at Radicle Gallery

2.00 pm – 5.00 pm

Reverb of Memory: Listening as Archive

Listening Session/Workshop at CoCA Symbiosis

Reverb of Memory transforms the CoCA Symbiosis Listening Room, crafted entirely from reclaimed and donated materials, into a participatory archive of sound, memory, and material. Drawing from vintage Sinhala songs from the 1950s to 1980s on vinyl and cassette, the listening session invites participants to listen together, bring objects or garments imbued with personal sound memory, and share their stories. The Listening Room's bespoke sound system accommodates multiple sources, including vinyl, cassette, and live contributions, enabling a seamless interplay between recorded and participant-generated sound. Through these shared acts of listening and offering, Reverb of Memory enacts a rhythm of collective memory, forging alliances between individual and communal soundscapes. Contributions may remain in the CoCA archive, creating a living repository that continues to evolve beyond the festival.

Limited capacity. Registration needed.

Tuesday 27 January

3.00 pm – 5.00 pm

Storytelling and Game Development with Chamindika Abeysinghe and Mahesha Kariyapperuma

Workshop at Radicle Gallery

Artists Chamindika Abeysinghe and Mahesha Kariyapperuma delve into game development as storytelling and building alternative worlds with unique characters, landscapes, and narrative arcs. In this workshop, participants will be exposed to various methods in which they can begin visualising a digital or analogue game based on a subject they enjoy.

Recommended for teenagers/young adults aged 13 to 18. Limited capacity. Registration needed. No previous experience in game design needed.

6.00 pm

Bread Modular

Live Music Act at Musicmatters Soundroom

Bread Modular is a modular synthesiser platform built from the ground up, designed and assembled in Sri Lanka. Traditionally, modular systems are extremely capable but also expensive and bulky. Bread Modular takes a minimalistic approach that makes it portable and affordable, while still introducing modern features. It is fully open source, including schematics, design files, software, and even part sourcing. In this performance, they will show what is possible with Bread Modular for creating soundscapes, live techno and real-time 3D visualizations.

9.30 pm – 10.30 pm

RHYTHM KINO

Film Screening at Liberty by Scope

The Silk Road of Pop

Directed by Sameer Farooq and Ursula Engel | 2012 | 53 min | English, Uyghur, Chinese

The Silk Road of Pop takes viewers deep into the heart of Xinjiang, where the Uyghur Muslim minority uses music as a form of identity and resistance. Through the story of Ay, a young Uyghur woman torn between tradition and modern life, the film reveals a dynamic underground scene where hip-hop, heavy metal, and ancient folk melodies collide. Set against a backdrop of cultural repression and rapid change, the documentary captures how music becomes both a refuge and a voice for a generation striving to be heard.

Wednesday 28 January

10.00 am – 11.30 am

Laboratory of Sustainability 4

Workshop at Arka Kinari

Limited capacity. Registration needed.

3.00 pm – 4.30 pm

PARAMPARA:

**From generation to generation
a collaboration between the Chitrasena
Dance Company and reVerb Collective**
Performance at Kamatha (BMICH)

Limited capacity, Registration needed.

7.00 pm – 8.30 pm

PARAMPARA:

**From generation to generation
a collaboration between the Chitrasena
Dance Company and reVerb Collective**
Performance at Kamatha (BMICH)

PARAMPARA—‘from generation to generation’ in Sinhala—portrays three generations of female professional dancers who, despite social and political obstacles, developed and upheld a traditionally male-centric ritual dance form through the island’s turbulent post-independence history. In an immersive video installation with live dance, archival material from three generations of the Chitrasena family is overlaid with imagery from the rapidly changing present, set against the backdrop of Sri Lanka’s political and economic shifts across three distinct eras. The dancer’s body and the rhythm of the drum, fed by a millennia-old form, combine as a moment of resistance. What is the future of the dance?

Limited capacity, Registration needed.

*Supported by the International Coproduction
Fund of the Goethe-Institut*

7.00 pm – 9.00 pm

Colomboscope x Barefoot Garden Cafe's Pub Quiz with Quizmaster Lihan Mendis *Quiz and Gathering at Barefoot Gallery*

The Pub Quiz at the iconic Barefoot Garden Cafe adjacent to the gallery is a whimsical bi-monthly affair that features trivia-based rounds covering a range of topics, including current affairs, art, music, pop culture, science and very obscure areas of interest to quizmaster Lihan Mendis. This special pub quiz will include an additional round dedicated to Rhythm Alliances!

**Limited Capacity. Registration required
(Group participation preferred). Dinner and
drinks for purchase from the cafe.**

6.00 pm

Curated Walk with Hajra Haider Karrar *at Rio Complex*

7.00 pm

Pluriversal Intertitia_Interfluid Localities by Houïda *Performance at Rio Complex*

Pluriversal Intertitia_Interfluid Localities is a transdisciplinary, immersive performance that explores pluriversal localities, memory work, entangled temporality, and cultural frequency through collected, imagined, and recorded sound, an expanded notion of language and memorized movements while also delving into quantum field theory. Inspired by the concept of ‘pluralistic realism’—the idea that the world is both one and many, unfinished and yet to become—this performance positions the Mediterranean Sea as a space of coexisting realities.

Wednesday 28 January

8.00 pm

Dizzi Geetha Live Set

Performance at Rio Complex

Through layered compositions with acoustic and electronic instruments, Dizzi Geetha will create powerful soundscapes weaving together Dub, Asian influences, African Tech, Psytrance, and nature sounds. As a creator, producer, multi-instrumentalist, theatre maker, DJ and ceremonial facilitator from Sri Lanka, based in the Netherlands, Dizzi Geetha's work is largely shaped by their love for ecology as well as their history of displacement and finding roots through sonic place-making. Their work is rooted in building sonic journeys informed by contexts of healing, energetic transformation, and re-connection with a planetary pulse.

9.30 pm – 11.00 pm

RHYTHM KINO

Film Screening at Liberty by Scope

Electro Chaabi

Directed and Written by Hind Meddeb
2013 | 77 mins | Arabic w/ English subtitles

Electro Chaabi plunges into the vibrant, chaotic streets of Cairo, where a new musical revolution is unfolding. Blending folk melodies, electronic beats, and rap-style chants, this raw and energetic genre gives voice to Egypt's disillusioned youth. Born from street parties and wedding celebrations, Electro Chaabi channels frustration, rebellion, and joy into a pulsing sound that defies social and religious taboos. Director Hind Meddeb captures this underground movement with the same passion that Buena Vista Social Club brought to Cuba, revealing a generation dancing its way to freedom.

Thursday 29 January

10.00 am – 10.00 pm

Weather Reports: Sounding Sri Lanka's Climate Across Diaspora and Homeland

Talks, workshops, skill-sharing, zine-making, collaborative creations, and performances at Barefoot Gallery

Weather Reports: Sounding Sri Lanka's Climate Across Diaspora and Homeland is a collaborative trilingual sound and performance project bringing together Sri Lankan artists from both the island and the UK diaspora, creatively responding to climate change in Sri Lanka. At the conclusion of a 10-day creative residency, it has brought together ten Sri Lankan artists: Imaad Majeed, Mayun Kaluthantri, Tashyana Handy, Dinoj M, SajaS, Toulip Wonder, Suren Seneviratne, Kavitha Balasingham, Ushara, and Seth De Silva, for a programme of talks, workshops, skill-sharing, zine-making, collaborative creation and performances. The programme will also include guest talks and workshops by Shayna Fonseka, Anousha Payne and Deepthi Wickramasinghe, with further guest contributors to be announced.

This project is supported by the British Council's Connections Through Culture Grant, KACHA KACHA, DreamSpace Records, Colomboscope, and the AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme. It was developed by Toulip Wonder and Imaad Majeed, with support from Suren Seneviratne.

Thursday 29 January

3.00 pm – 4.30 pm

PARAMPARA:

**From generation to generation
a collaboration between the Chitrasena
Dance Company and reVerb Collective**
Performance at Kamatha (BMICH)

7.00 pm – 8.30 pm

PARAMPARA:

**From generation to generation
a collaboration between the Chitrasena
Dance Company and reVerb Collective**
Performance at Kamatha (BMICH)

Limited capacity. Registration needed.

*Supported by the International Coproduction
Fund of the Goethe-Institut*

7.00 pm – 8.00 pm

Cosmogony by Mawongany

*Live Music Act and Performance
at Musicmatters Soundroom*

Blending èlè heritage with contemporary digital arts, Martinican artist Mawongany will present an immersive musical performance, Cosmogony. Through sound, ritual, and futurist storytelling, it imagines humanity's rebirth as mycelium to journey toward a new world. Mawongany engages in sonic expression and collective pedagogies especially resonant in Caribbean ancestral knowledge, particularly the Bèlè rhythmic tradition and the communal agricultural tradition of Lasotè, to explore decolonial ecologies and resistance. He has founded Permacтивie, an association based in Fonds Saint-Denis, focused on youth learning initiatives, agronomy, ethical principles of permaculture and artistic practice through the values of

koudmen—mutual aid, earth care, and collective abundance. Through a long-term partnership with the Spore Initiative in Berlin, Mawongany is part of the collective project Welto and the Sacred Bush—Learning from Caribbean gardens.

*In partnership with and
supported by Spore Initiative*

9.30 – 11.30 pm

RHYTHM KINO

Film Screening at Liberty by Scope

GROWTHesque

Kehelmala Studios

2022 | 45 mins | English

GROWTHesque is a cinematic rendition of a solo play depicting a Sri Lankan teenager's coming of age during the 2022 economic crisis in the country. The play combines political commentary, comedy, fusion songs, dance, and memorable character sketches into a 45-minute rollercoaster ride through its protagonist's lived experience. GROWTHesque debuted as The One TEEN Show at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August 2022. It was rechristened and staged in November 2022 at the world's largest solo play festival, United Solo, in New York City, where Singhage won the award for Best Emerging Actor.

Kehelmala is a creative film studio that seeks to inspire and sustain audiences through impactful storytelling that pushes past boundaries, embraces diversity, and provokes thought.

Written and performed by Leeth Singhage
Dramaturgy and produced by Nishantha de Silva and Kehelmala Studios.

Thursday 29 January

Unplugged

Directed by Mladen Kovacevic
2013 | 52 mins | Serbian, English, French
with English subtitles

In the forests of Serbia, Josip, Vera, and Petar transform leaves into musical instruments, exploring the subtle melodies hidden in nature. From whistling and flute-like tones to coaxing sounds from supermarket plastic, their passion turns everyday objects into music. *Unplugged* is a gentle, intimate documentary that celebrates the quiet harmony between humans and the natural world, capturing the art, curiosity, and dedication of these leaf virtuosos.

Cinematography: Pablo Ferro | Sound: Aleksandar Protic | Editing: Natasa Damjanovic | Music: Nemanja Mosurovic
Production: Horopter Film Production, Helmi Films | Distributor: Taskovski Films Ltd.

Friday 30 January

2.00 pm – 5.00 pm

Reverb of Memory: Listening as Archive
Listening Session and Workshop
at CoCA Symbiosis

Reverb of Memory transforms the CoCA Symbiosis Listening Room, crafted entirely from reclaimed and donated materials, into a participatory archive of sound, memory, and material. Drawing from vintage Sinhala songs from the 1950s to 1980s on vinyl and cassette, the listening session invites participants to listen together, bring objects or garments imbued with personal sound memory, and share their stories. The Listening Room's bespoke sound system accommodates multiple sources, including vinyl, cassette, and live contributions, enabling a seamless interplay between recorded and participant-generated sound. Through these shared acts of listening and offering, Reverb of Memory enacts a rhythm of collective memory, forging alliances between individual and communal soundscapes. Contributions may remain in the CoCA archive, creating a living repository that continues to evolve beyond the festival.

Limited capacity. Registration needed.

Friday 30 January

3.00 pm – 5.00 pm

Stories of Marine Species: Claymaking With Tissa de Alwis

Workshop at Soul Studio

In this special workshop designed for children, sculptor Tissa de Alwis infuses wonderment and curiosity around marine species endemic to Sri Lanka's waters as well as endangered ocean life. This workshop will be hands-on, involving plasticine clay to build scenes and lively characters.

***Recommended for children aged 8 - 12.
Limited capacity. Registration needed.***

Rooted in choreographic research, embodied practice, and climate justice inquiry, the residency engages rhythm as duration - through slowness, repetition, endurance, and cycles of care and collapse — responding to lived ecological and social precarity.

This informal gathering offers a glimpse into ongoing research and movement explorations emerging through the residency. It is not a performance, but an open moment of witnessing process, questions, and material in formation, foregrounding embodiment as a site for reflection, responsiveness, and collective imagination.

5.00 pm – 10.00 pm

Matri-Anarchy: Stomping Sisters

at Rio Complex

As the festival tempo soon rounds off, gathering for an evening of dance grooves and 'Matri-Anarchy' with selectresses' across generations arriving together for a first ever session of funky basslines, trip-hop, and femme heavy electronica from Mother Perera and Sunara to Kaftan and Kahli Selecta.

Weathering Grounds

Follow MeshGround and Colomboscope social media and websites for updates.

Weathering Grounds is a choreographic research residency led by MeshGround, supported by the British Council's Connections Through Culture Programme, and developed in collaboration with ClimArts and Alleyne Dance, working with artists across Sri Lanka grounded in dance and movement.

Saturday 31 January

10.00 am - 11:00 am

Curated Walk with Hajra Haider Karrar

at Colpetty Town House

12.00 pm - 1:00 pm

Curated Walk with Ricarda Hommann

at Barefoot Gallery

2.00 pm

**Curated Walk with
Pramodha Weerasekera**

at Radicle Gallery

4.00 pm - 6.00 pm

It's a Universal Musical Struggle

A procession of sound makers, performers, cultural workers across Colombo from Town Hall in Cinnamon Gardens through the neighbourhood of Kompannavidiya (Slave Island) towards the former 'agitation site' by the Galle Face Green, this cultural parade of blending genres, styles and movements reclaims public space for a moment of united celebration and together rounding up the festival cycle through rebellious and celebratory Rhythm Alliances.

Arka Kinari



Arka (Latin) means vessel, derived from arcere—"to hold off or defend." Kinari (Sanskrit) refers to a half-human, half-bird musician and guardian of the tree of life. Together, Arka Kinari is a marine cultural platform and an ecologically conscious vessel: a solar-powered seventy-ton sailing ship that has taken voyages to promote live performance cultures, while actively fostering exchanges to mitigate the impacts of climate change and rekindle our relationship with the ocean sphere.

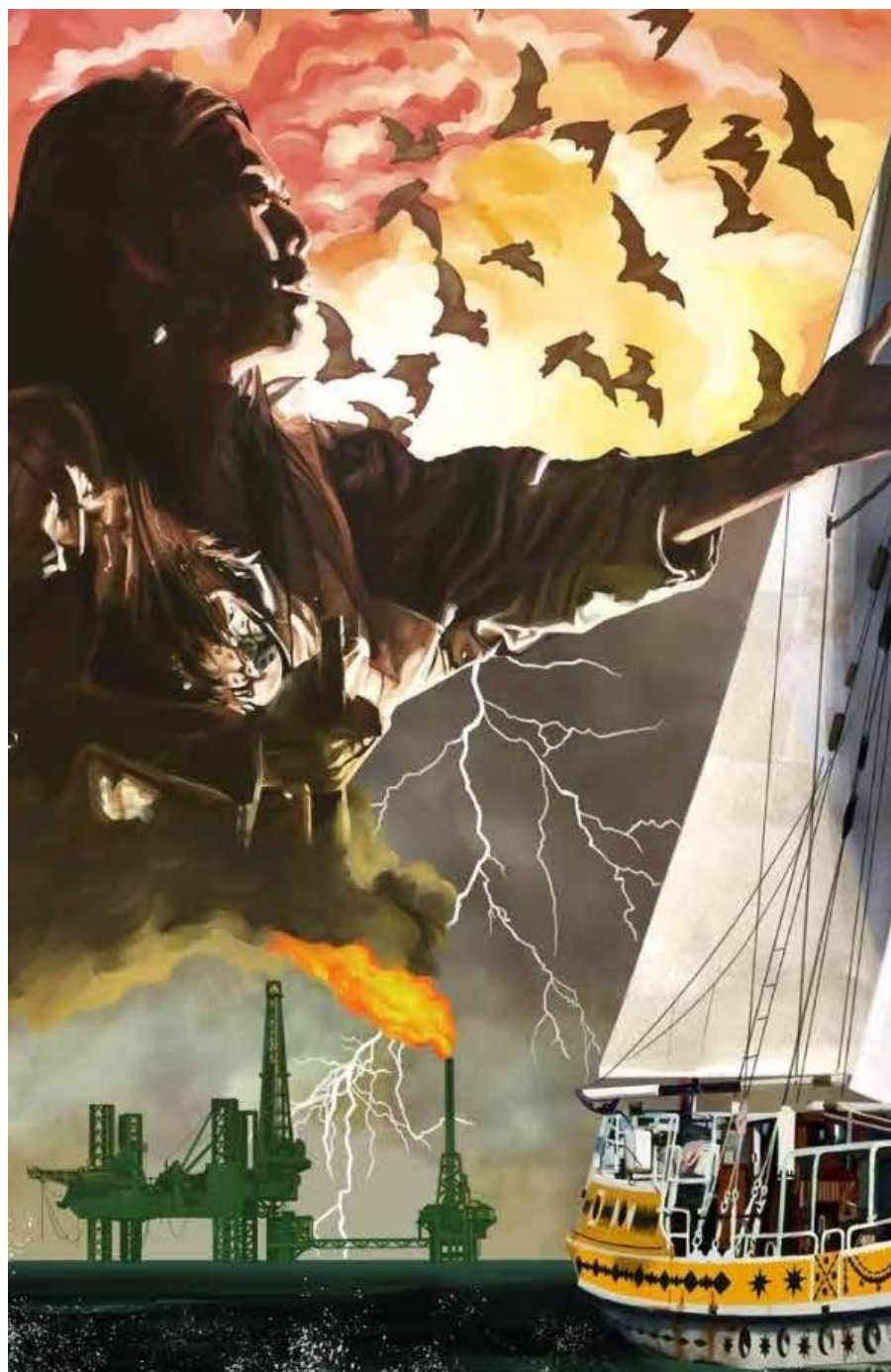
Musicians Grey Filastine and Nova Ruth discovered an abandoned vessel in 2019 in a shipyard in Rotterdam and transformed it into a sustainable home, mode of transport, and international stage. Since then, they have lived aboard with fellow artists and climate activists, sailing historic maritime trade routes with culture as their cargo.

This floating stage has circled the globe, covering more than 50,000 nautical miles. By day, the crew runs the ship, by night, they turn into a venue for live music and performance.

In a world where the majority of greenhouse gas emissions in the music industry come from touring, Arka Kinari offers an alternative: sailing to festivals in major cities while also stopping in coastal towns to connect with communities most affected by environmental devastation and rising seas.

In 2026, Arka Kinari will ride with the monsoon tradewinds to the Indian subcontinent, the Arabian Peninsula, and the Mediterranean, charting a course that symbolically reverses colonial routes. When docking for Colomboscope, the ship will open its decks to the city, offering their iconic The Port Performance, recording space for sonic exchanges via Laut Loud, and Laboratory of Sustainability — an onboard educational lab. Visitors are welcomed to learn about the vessel's marine rhythms, ideas and visions for communal futures with the sea.

Supported by Goethe-Institut



Melodies in My Head



Melodies In My Head: Songs + Stories of Today by anthropologist and audiovisual performer Thomas Burkhalter and musician and producer Daniel Jakob is a live act of 'Anthropology meets AV' that includes a range of interviews and lyrics development with artists, musicians, and collectives across the Global South bridging to the North. This approach connects the fields of art, anthropology, and journalism by way of what Burkhalter, founder of the platform for contemporary music, journalism, and festival making, Norient, terms as 'multimodal storytelling.' Melodies In My Head tells stories of what it means to be an artist today, through an intriguing and emotionally charged experimental format.

This 60-minute live work evokes joy, anger, trauma, and doubt—offering a raw confrontation with pressing truths of our time. Some lyrics stem from 15 years of ethnographic interviews, others from fictional characters.

The various elements emerge from deep research into local music scenes, urgent realities of urban inequity, hyper-consumerism, environmental calamity, and youth resistance movements.

Multi-genre singers from the Swiss and international contexts are part of this project blending pop with underground club music kitsch. It also foregrounds Burkhalter's research of 'mediascapes' in cities such as Beirut, Nairobi, and Delhi, and will circulate for the first time in Sri Lanka, opening paths for new encounters of creative collaboration.

Supported by Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia



Photo credits: Stephen Nthusi

NooN

Nuwan Gunawardhana and Band

NooN, led by musician, performer, and educator Nuwan Gunawardhana, initially formed as a Neo Papara Collective, expanding Papara through new ideas while integrating compositional and performance tools from other musical genres, including jazz, big band, and folk traditions. Papara (also known as Papare, Molam or Kawadi) is a popular Sri Lankan music genre shaped as a blend of South Indian, Portuguese, Dutch and British historical influences and characterized by the vibrant use of brass and percussion instrumentation. Summoning an atmosphere of energy, jubilation, and ceremony, Papara is frequently performed at sports events, weddings and religious processions. Nuwan's research and musical alliances with a range of bandmates and artists unleashes a bold and celebratory act that enlivens this legacy genre in fresh directions.



Photo credit: Nuwan Gunawardhana / NooN

PARAMPARA

By reVerb and Chitrasena Dance Company

The renowned Chitrasena Dance School is an oasis in the midst of Colombo's ever-growing concrete jungle and hectic traffic. Passing through the large gate on Baseline Road, one enters a garden with old trees, and hidden behind them is a dance floor. More recently, a small home, the Gurugedera, blending in like a treehouse, was added as the residence for the senior-most teacher. This is where Guru Vajira, the Prima Ballerina of Ceylon, spent her last years, and Guru Upeka now lives. For nearly twenty years, it has been here that the Chitrasena Dance Company, now in its third generation, has devoted itself to an art form, derived from ritual and adapted for theatre, practising it with deep commitment in a rapidly changing present.

Ten years ago, a large metal box sitting in an attic space under the school's roof became the starting point for the Company's collaboration with the Berlin-based collective reVerb. Inside were items from the company's archive: photographs from tours around the world, rehearsal footage, and film material spanning decades of artistic work. The question arose: how might this living heritage be brought into dialogue with the present day, conflating theatre,

dance, and video? In other words, a danced archive in motion.

PARAMPARA is a portrait of three generations of female Sri Lankan dancers who, in spite of social and political obstacles, refined their art form across vastly different eras. How did Vajira (mother/grandmother), Upeka (mother), and Thaji (granddaughter) sustain a traditionally male Kandyan ritual dance within a patriarchal society, especially as the dance also became increasingly commercialised? PARAMPARA takes its name from the Sinhala term for "across generations", a reference to how ritual dance was traditionally passed from one generation of ritual practitioners to the next. It is this reinvention of that concept that forms the anchor for this intermedia production; it asks how the present generation will inherit and carry forward this legacy.

Three generations reflect three chapters of Sri Lanka's modern history. At the time of independence in 1948, Vajira began her artistic journey with Chitrasena, a key pioneer of dance theatre in Sri Lanka. Through his training (that included ritual masters), encouragement, and

artistic partnership, she became the first woman to take on a professional career as a Kandyan dancer for stage, not a ritual performer, respecting that women traditionally did not perform the ritual. Her eldest daughter, Upeka, although she learnt from ritual masters as well as from her parents, matured into a virtuoso on stage, becoming a soloist during the nearly thirty-year civil war, continuing to perform both locally and internationally even as parts of the island remained inaccessible. Today, Vajira's youngest granddaughter, Thaji, the Company's principal dancer, alongside her cousin Heshma Wignaraja, the eldest granddaughter, choreographer and artistic director of the Company, seeks to pursue her dance art in a post-war, post-Covid, post-economic-crisis world, now also shaped by the impact of climate emergency and AI.

PARAMPARA creates a dialogue between film and live performance, forming a freestanding installation where dancer Thaji Dias and drummer Sadew Athsara interact with shifting projected imagery. Drumming, inseparable from the dance, becomes a force of impulse, tension, and counterpoint for the moving image.

An immersive dance film installation: The three-channel video work layers archive material and newly filmed footage. Vajira, shown as a young woman suspended in an endless jump, is mirrored by Thaji, who strives to echo her grandmother's perfection of line and form. She enters moments from Upeka's

role in the 1978 ballet *Kinkini Kolama*, now situated inside a small camp shop in Berlin rather than a Kandyan aristocrat's home, as originally conceived. In another scene, a moment is created showing all three generations dancing together. The camera then follows Thaji into a vast, deserted convention centre, a stark monument to political excess, where she dances before 1,500 empty seats—offering a quiet meditation on the place of art. A dream-like image of a mask dancer appears against machines tearing through an environmentally sensitive area in Hambantota, echoing the tensions between preservation and change.

Archive research connecting Colombo and Cold War Berlin: The collaboration between the Chitrasena Dance Company and reVerb extends beyond the studio. Both groups have revisited the archive together conceptually and filmed in both cities over the years. Their research uncovered Super-8 film and slide material tracing the National Ballet of Ceylon's tours in both East and West Germany between the 1950s and 1970s. Re-enacted footage of Thaji from 2016 sits alongside East German news reports of Vajira's arrival in Berlin in 1963, performances at the Volksbühne, and a workshop with Gret Palucca in Dresden. The opposing receptions of the Company's work on each side of the Iron Curtain reveal how dance became a medium through which social commentary could emerge, showing the power of art to move beyond form and speak to human experience.

The moving body, in this case rooted in tradition, becomes an agent of change. After independence, traditional dance became part of Sri Lanka's cultural narrative—"who we are as a nation". Chitrasena and Vajira established a respected theatre art for Sri Lanka's modern dances, performing internationally at venues such as London's Sadler's Wells and Moscow's Kremlin Theatre as pioneering cultural ambassadors. Over the decades, however, dance on the island has become increasingly commercialised, through hotel shows, tarmac welcomes for dignitaries, event openings, wedding acts, competitions, and reality shows—formats that often overshadow the need to maintain a dedicated and sustained artistic practice. As the private sector and State increasingly promote commercial settings, the depth and intention of dance as a respected theatrical practice is under threat, and its capacity to question, provoke, or uphold complex and nuanced cultural meaning has been diminished.

During the Aragayala protests in 2022, Thaji brought her dance to the Independence Square as part of the artists' protest in solidarity, an offering of dance at a moment when the country was searching for voice and direction. PARAMPARA reflects on how art can remain alive and a truthful anchor in such times, and how a millennial-old traditional movement language passes through the body: an archive that continues to speak to the present.

In any collaboration that spans continents, there are moments of bewilderment and astonishment that open new ground. At its best, the joint effort brings about another narrative style and aesthetic to the fore. As PARAMPARA ends, the theatre doors open and Thaji dances again on the earth where the ritual once began. From there, she will carry her dance to Berlin, where her ancestors made theatre boards reverberate more than seventy-five years ago.

With thanks to Mirak Raheem.





Vajira Chitrasena arrives in Berlin
1963
Image courtesy of the
Chitrasena Dance Company Archive

Chitrasena Dance Company and reVerb Collective

Established in 1944 by the familial duo Chitrasena and Vajira, the Chitrasena Dance Company has remained an inimitable cultural hallmark in Sri Lanka's history of modern dance and the Kandyan movement lexicon. Over the decades, the company expanded its modest beginnings at the Chitrasena family home—where it first nurtured dance education—to become a cornerstone of Sri Lanka's performing arts and representing the country on international platforms. Despite frequent relocations and periods of hardship, the intergenerational community fostered by the Chitrasena Dance Company has remained focused on the efflorescence of dance culture and are led by rigorous commitment by the principal dancers and educators over three generations. The Dance Company's unique interpretations of traditional Kandyan vannams, ballets, and folk-inspired narratives have shaped the cultural imagination of generations. They carry a disciplined and recognized approach to choreography, percussion, and storytelling through movement.

reVerb Collective comprises Susanne Vincenz and Isabel Robson, who focus on dramaturgy and video scenography, respectively. Together, they began reVerb in 2013, an arts collective, which explores the boundaries between documentary and staged images, theatre, and installation. They research mixed-reality scenography in the context of dance. Their intermedia practice, expansive relation to dance archives, and practice-led pedagogy have been crucial in the shaping of PARAMPARA. In collaboration with the dance company directed by Heshma Wignaraja, PARAMPARA presents the Chitrasena legacy contextualized from historical phases, international tour circuits, across tumultuous socio-political upheavals into the present time. Several years of dialogue and artistic research have led to this anticipated premiere: a polyphonous and vibrant praxis across multiple screens into the dance floor with virtuoso choreography by Thaji Dias and drummer Sadew Athsara.

*Supported by the International
Coproduction Fund of the Goethe-Institut*





Image courtesy of the artists ©Z.Soleiman

Reappropriation Riddims



Reappropriation Riddims is an acoustic and artistic homage to reggae history through collaborative productions performed, produced, and mastered as new versions of classic foundation riddims on the occasion of the inter- and antidisiplinary arts festival Colomboscope Rhythm Alliances in Sri Lanka. The series opens pathways of recall and reunion with legendary dub grooves and riddims 16,000 kilometers East of Jamaica. Inviting poets, spoken word artists, rappers and singers to bring words and melodies—rhyming and vibing in different tongues and dialects—to offer their views and values celebrating cross-cultural alliances pon riddim.

The name 'Reappropriation Riddims', comes from the Jamaican patois, the pidgin practice of breaking and remaking language. Blending repatriation with appropriation, taking the colonizer's words, intentionally spinning, jamming and splicing, and thereby redefining them. This indicates that interpreting the Caribbean riddims with a polyphonous mix of South Asian instrumentation and harmonics, is in fact a return to one of its many roots.

In modern times, for migrants worldwide, often working in hostile and estranged environments far away from their places of origin, the lyrics of Reggae and symbols of Rastafari speaking of return to the promised land, have stirred emotions and served to give strength and stamina to endure long times away from home, be it in the capitalist desert utopias, the multicultural cities of old Europe, or their delusional, imploding counterparts across the Atlantic.

From DJ Nihal to MIA and the reggae literate UK-born grandson of the fisherman from Sinimodera, as much as for the Canadian granddaughter of a temple trustee from Nagerkovil, Babylon is the universal metaphor for a life in perceived slavery that will be left behind one fine day, when all work is over.

Dub, Sampling, and Re-mix culture come from the same place of choosing what is considered loved, sacred, and fundamental, inviting additions through variation, lyrics and collaborators, thereby creating new compositions and putting them out into the world to, in turn, inspire, transform and keep growing. This project pays homage to the hybridity of influences, Jamaican sound system culture, rebellion, and righteousness.

One look backwards, two steps forward

This project is a collective vision in the spirit of riddim and sampling culture: while acknowledging those that have created, it invites fresh energies of creation and distribution, to see reggae culture as philosophy of alliance and resistance and harmony. The riddims as well as the stem recordings are made accessible on the website as high quality recordings for free download, remixing, re-recording and any other use you can dream up.

Colomboscope Repropriation Riddims is Copyleft and subscribes to Creative Commons. Nobody can hold any exclusive rights, monetize, limit or bar anyone from using and sampling them. All that is created should be shared generously.

We hugely encourage and enthusiastically await receiving collaborative tracks across geographical boundaries and are happy to help facilitate this process. Get in touch via: riddim@colomboscope.lk if you seek assistance in realizing a sonic collaboration.

*Commissioned by Colomboscope 2026
and Fold Media Collective.*



colomboscope.lk/reappropriation-riddims

Recorded in October 2025,
at Tower Hall Studios, Colombo.

Divanka Sewmin

Drums

Michael De Silva

Guitar

Nuwan Gunawardhana

Trombone / Trumpet / Hakgediya

Nigel Perera

Keys / FX

Sebastiampillai Vasanberk

Harmonium / Mridangam / Talam

Uvindu Perera

Electric Bass / Double Bass

Produced and arranged by **Asvajit**

Recording Engineer: Denham Hakel
Masters: Jean-Patrice Rémillard (Pheek)
Tamil Translation: Jesus Rockinson
Project Coordination: Lihan Mendis
An Idea by Jan Ramesh de Saram

THE RIDDIMS

Rooted in the rich tradition of versioning, riddims are living musical frameworks—carried, reshaped, and reinterpreted across generations, geographies, and technologies. **Reappropriation Riddims** revisits foundational reggae and dancehall rhythms not as historical artifacts, but as open systems for dialogue, translation, and renewal. By tracing their journeys from analog roots to digital futures, and re-contextualising them through South Asian instrumentation, regional rhythms, and contemporary production, the project explores shared histories of migration, resistance, and sound-system culture

Fade Away

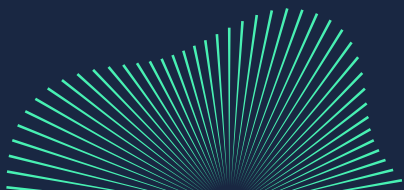
The Fade Away riddim, borrows its name from the deeply spiritual and socially conscious roots reggae protest anthem *Fade Away* by Junior Byles produced by Earl “Chinna” Smith 1975 at Channel One Studios. The riddim saw many versions before having its digital revival in the 90s with a rerelease by Bobby Digital’s Label Digital B which featured versions by artists like Sizzla and Jah Mali. This new interpretation features percussion played on the *Hakgediya*, a type of conch shell which is used as a kind of trumpet in the traditional ritual and folk music of Sri Lanka.

Truth & Rights

The Truth and Rights riddim originates from Jonny Osbourne’s 1980 album of the same name, produced by Clement “Coxone” Dodd at Studio One and was celebrated for its socially conscious lyrics that call for living in accordance with what’s true and right. Like the rest of the *Reappropriation Riddims*, this classic also saw a huge revival through its 2005 re-release on the New Yorker Massive B label with versions by Sizzla, Chuck Fender and Burro Banton.

Tempo

The Tempo riddim is a cornerstone of Jamaica’s digital dancehall era, emerging in the mid-1980s with its instantly recognizable bubbling bassline. Named after the original track performed by Anthony Red Rose and produced by King Tubby, Tempo helped define the sound of early digital reggae. Its minimalist structure has invited countless reinterpretations over the years. In this *Reappropriation Riddims* version, the bassline is reimagined through a harmonium and double-bass approach inspired by fishing communities in northern Sri Lanka, blending Caribbean digital heritage with coastal South Asian musical traditions.



Cuss Cuss

The Cuss Cuss riddim is one of reggae's most enduring foundation basslines, continuously reinterpreted across more than five decades. First recorded by Lloyd Robinson in 1969, it gained iconic status through King Tubby's heavy dub treatments and dreamlike versions by artists such as Horace Andy. In the mid-1990s, New York's Bobby Konders revived the riddim on his Massive B label, sparking a roots resurgence for a new generation. The Repropriation Riddims version reimagines Cuss Cuss through a sub-continental lens, incorporating traditional percussion instruments including the mridangam and taals, extending its global rhythmic lineage.

Real Rock

Created in 1967 by Sound Dimension at Clement "Coxone" Dodd's legendary Studio One, the Real Rock riddim stands as one of the most versioned rhythms in reggae history. Emerging at the transition from rocksteady to reggae, it became a blueprint for countless interpretations across decades. Landmark versions include Willie Williams' haunting Armageddon Time, later reinterpreted by The Clash, alongside unexpected cross-genre adaptations by artists such as hip-hop pioneer KRS-One. Its durability lies in its stark groove and spiritual weight, allowing each generation to recontextualize Real Rock while preserving its deep Studio One DNA.

Song of Ceylon: Reverberation



A reimagined musical score for *The Song of Ceylon* (1934), Basil Wright's landmark documentary, this live performance at the Rio Cinema sets contemporary electronic music against the film's meticulously composed colonial gaze, placing modern sound in direct tension with images of early 20th-Century Ceylon: Kandyan drumming and dance by N. Ukkuva and R.W.G. Surambe, railway lines carving through mountains, plantation labour, coastal livelihoods, and cycles of ritual and festivity.

Electronic musicians Asvajit Boyle and Nigel Perera, alongside several other musicians, respond to these scenes with a newly composed sonic landscape—one that resists illustration and instead introduces hints of friction, dissonance, and temporal rupture. Originally produced by John Grierson under the patronage of the Ceylon Tea Board, the film stands as a carefully constructed artefact of imperial observation and mercantile ambition.

Nearly 90 years on, Walter Leigh's original score is displaced by contemporary electronic sound, allowing the images to be unsettled, re-read, and haunted—opening space for post-colonial reflection, sonic intervention, and the reclamation of presence.

*With special thanks to the
British Film Institute (BFI)*



Still from *The Song of Ceylon*
Directed by Basil Wright
Produced by John Grierson, voiced by Lionel Wendt
1934

Liberty by Scope Cinemas

Perera Elsewhere
Rhythm Kino

(Refer to the festival schedule for further information)



Cinematic Legacy

Established in 1955 at the bustling Colpetty junction, Liberty cinema quickly became a defining address for cinema-lovers in Colombo. Its distinctive mid-century corner tower and sweeping façade made it more than a movie theatre—it was a landmark. In 2017, under the stewardship of Scope Cinemas, the building underwent a transformation into a modern two-screen complex. Premieres, mainstream releases, and curated screenings are held at the venue today, which frames one of Colombo's iconic streetscapes. Liberty by Scope Cinemas bridges the golden age of cinema and dynamic future of movie viewership in Sri Lanka. It hosts the screening programme Rhythm Kino, focusing on independent music cultures, dissent, and sonic resistance.



RHYTHM ALLIANCES

PROGRAMME VENUE

Perera Elsewhere



Perera Elsewhere (aka Sasha Perera) is a Berlin-based, UK-raised Sri Lankan-rooted electronic artist, producer, DJ, lyricist, and trumpeter known for her genre-defying sound that fuses experimental pop, dub, rap, and “doom folk.” Her new album *Just Wanna Live Some* (2025) expands her sonic palette that balances raw emotion, poetic lyricism, and deep bass-driven atmospheres. However, her anti-genre approach to music making and wide spectrum of productions have one thing in common. They feel intrinsically human. In 2011 the Goethe-Institut and Bang Bang presented Sasha Perera with her band Jahcoozi for the first time in Sri Lanka. That concert at Mount Lavinia Beach during a cyclonic storm remains unforgettable by those who attended. Fifteen years later, Perera Elsewhere returns for a cinematic concert experience with hypnotic sounds and visuals to Liberty by SCOPE Cinemas.

Supported by the Goethe-Institut



Perera Elsewhere
Just Wanna Live Some
2025

Artwork by Hugo Schneider
Photography by Gene Glover

Festival Code of Conduct

As you prepare to join us for the festival this year, we ask that you endorse this code of conduct to ensure a safe, respectful, and enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

Colomboscope is dedicated to creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all participants as well as for the local community that graciously hosts us.

The festival will not tolerate harassment, discrimination, or intimidation of any kind – whether physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or digital. This applies regardless of gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, age, appearance, marital status, religion, ethnicity, ability or any other personal characteristic. All visitors and participants deserve to feel safe and respected at any time of day or night at festival gatherings. We aim to make the festival as accessible as possible. If you encounter barriers to participation, please let our team know so that we can support you.

Should you witness any inappropriate behaviour, we ask that you do not remain a silent bystander. Offer support in the way that feels safest and notify a member of the festival team immediately who will be able to listen, provide assistance and intervene where necessary. Should the festival be notified of inappropriate behaviour, we may revoke access and further engagement.

This code is not meant to restrict joy or creativity. It simply ensures that no one's experience comes at the expense of another's safety or dignity. Together, we can make Colomboscope a space of mutual respect, creative celebration, and community.

Visitor Information

FESTIVAL DATES

21 - 31 January 2026

Colomboscope venues for exhibitions and events are free and open to the public. Some events require prior registration.

EXHIBITION VENUES

These venues are open from 10 am - 7 pm during the festival period.

Barefoot Gallery

704 Galle Road, Colombo 4

*This venue is wheelchair accessible
Parking available*

Colpetty Townhouse

355 R A De Mel Mawatha, Colombo 3

*Part of this venue is wheelchair accessible
Limited street parking / hired ride preferable*

Radicle Gallery

De Mel building, Chatham St. Colombo 3

*Part of this venue is wheelchair accessible
Parking available*

Rio Complex

60 Kumaran Ratnam Road, Colombo 2

*Part of this venue is wheelchair accessible
Limited street parking / hired ride preferable*

Soul Studio

22 Buthgamuwa Road Rajagiriya

*This venue is wheelchair accessible
Parking available next to the Asiri Medical Lab*

ECHOES & REVERBS

These venues will be open during specific times for events. For more information, please refer to the printed handout and festival website.

Kamatha at BMICH

Buddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7

*This venue is wheelchair accessible
Parking available*

Liberty by Scope Cinemas

35 Srimath Anagarika Dharmapala Mawatha, Colombo 3

*This venue is wheelchair accessible
Parking available*

Musicmatters

141/6A Vauxhall Street, Colombo 2

*This venue is wheelchair accessible
Street parking available*

CoCA Arts/Symbiosis

33 Gothami Road, Colombo 8

*Part of this venue is wheelchair accessible
Street parking available*

Acknowledgements

Ripples are made by forces that plunge into still waters. This festival edition is dedicated to the pulse of time and rhythm-keeping; to the frequencies and reverberations that unfold as sonic worlds and remind us that the universe commenced as vibration and rupture.

The ninth Colomboscope edition has manifested through myriad ripples of creation by artists and collectives, musicians, filmmakers, choreographers, storytellers, and cultural organizers. It centres modes of alliance-building through the passing on of knowledge, crosscurrents of movement, living practices of defiance and generosity, and dwells with music as the most primary form of communication, ritual, and dreaming.

It is a pleasure to collaborate with Hajra Haider Karrar as festival curator and trusted ally. She has brought devoted poetic sensitivity and exercised great care in fostering artistic dialogues and exchanges with the larger context. Given the geopolitical schisms of our subcontinent and the belligerence of violence which continues to swell every now and again, there is much to conserve, repair and reimagine in the cultural affinities that mark enduring relationalities, generational belonging, and shared ecologies. Soon after Hajra's curatorial research visit,

India and Pakistan became unsettled grounds through an attack in Kashmir and armed conflict ensued across the borders. This year, Bangladesh and Nepal have seen popular resistance movements driven by young citizens and changing political regimes but also witnessed the systemic impact of corrupt autocracy and bloodshed. These broader realities—from wars and revolutionary movements to climate emergencies—form part of the atmosphere and substance within which we continue to make, circulate, and persist. Sri Lanka has yet again been vulnerable to ecological distress and yet, it remains a place where cultural alignments are still possible, enabling the building pathways of kinship. Amidst these paradoxes, we have endeavoured to build constellations and bridges. In small strides and despite many logistical hurdles, it has been refreshing to deepen global majority camaraderie and artistic solidarity through the making of 'Rhythm Alliances'.

This festival is a kind of epic score and procession without a fixed address, shaping itself around and within old and new corners of Colombo and its suburbs. We are immensely grateful to the sites hosting Colomboscope this year: Barefoot Gallery, Colpetty Townhouse, Soul Studio, Radicle Art Gallery, Liberty by Scope Cinemas, Rio Complex, MusicMatters, the Sail Lanka pier and wider partner activities across the city. Within the cultural industry it is only getting

harder to maintain a festival space that is 'anti-disciplinary' in spirit, free-to-access, and which seeks to make more room for mutual growth, process-led artistic synergies, and vibrant forms of assembly rather than catering to a globalized spectacle economy where 'bigger is better'. We are indebted to those who have believed in our mandate and outcomes, to all those individual philanthropists who have come on board as festival patrons and friends of the festival, cultural foundations and art councils, research institutions, diplomatic missions, galleries and in-kind supporters who have trusted the evolving recipe that makes Colomboscope what it is—each time anew.

We extend appreciation to our media partners and all those writers and critics who have reached out to reflect on our activities and committed to maintaining a focus on meaningful arts and culture journalism beyond algorithm-based data harvesting platforms.

The festival team has demonstrated empowered energy, innovation, and wit as steady co-conspirators. Shahdia Jamaldeen has been at the core of action around organizational structures and logistical planning with meticulous care, grit, and flair in keeping our team and partnerships growing. Pramodha Weerasekera has accompanied artistic visions with personal dedication and extended her diligence to exhibition making as well as to this publication. Our production and installation team led by Nishantha Hettiarachchi and Sonya Rajendran has once again masterfully catered to the desires of multifaceted creative

projects and ingeniously crafted low-tech architectural solutions with production collaborators and installation crew. After four years, we have recently bid farewell to our joyful all-rounder in communications and programming, Marie Waarlo. In the final months of preparations, Colomboscope has been strengthened and enriched by the plentiful talents and troubleshooting efforts of Ricarda Hommann, Maleeza Nicholas, Dylan Prins, Lihan Mendis, and Tanya Rodrigo. Fold Media Collective led by Asvajit Boyle and Nigel Perera remains central to composing Colomboscope's approach to design as a versatile expansion of artistic and curatorial ideas. Together with the accompanying technical, editorial, and documentation teams, and a wonderful crew of volunteers, it has taken monumental collective effort and commitment to realize yet another festival edition!

We hope to continue enchanting the curiosity of cross-generational publics, infuse formative cultural experiences, and keep diversifying engagement through the festival's non-commercial offerings with fresh surprises along the way.

Vibrations of alliance, rupture, and renewal await us.

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AMES YAVUZ

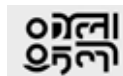
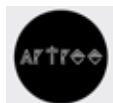
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Rhythm Alliances 2026



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BAREFOOT GALLERY COLOMBO

RADICLE
IN ART GALLERY



Kālam | கலம்
a space for cultural encounters
...where (visual) reality bends...



CURADO
OF SPACE



A Drummer's Song:

How Vernacular Rhythms Shape Contemporary Poetics of Resistance

Najm Hosein Syed's poem titled "Phumni (as told by Nihala Pirhaee)" interprets mythologies of water that circulate in Punjab, a border region split between India and Pakistan. It mobilizes the historical imaginary surrounding a cross-religious spiritual site, the Sakhi Sarwar shrine in present-day Pakistan. Prior to the formal decolonization of the subcontinent which led to the carving up of the region by a British-drawn international boundary, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh devotees would make their way from all over North India to pay their respects. This historical pilgrimage route now stands disrupted by the heavily militarized border separating India and Pakistan, which restricts the movement of people through increasingly unattainable visas.

Through this contemporary poem grounded in oral tradition that surrounds Sakhi Sarwar in North India, "Phumni (as told by Nihala Pirhaee)" counters the disciplining drive of dominant nationalism and majoritarian religion by engaging and honouring imaginaries of the South Asian past that predate colonial modernity. The poem's oral poetic and musical form, as well as its choice of language, are crucial to its poetics of resistance, serving to conjure and connect with marginalized lifeworlds that can shape alternative world-making efforts in the present.

by Sara Kazmi

The poem is structured as a cosmological narrative of origins, combining symbols and references from Sanskritic mythology, local folklore, and vernacular Islam in a telling that entwines the story of water with the history of caste exclusion and patriarchal control. The poem's narrator, referenced in the title and in the seventh stanza, "Nihala Pirhaee", is a fictional narrator imagined by Syed. The Pirhaee or Bharai are a so-called lower caste community of hereditary musicians, primarily drummers, who are key to the devotional practices surrounding Sakhi Sarwar.

The poet offers a reparative reading of myth and popular piety through the Pirhaee, centring a subalternized actor as the custodian of ancestral wisdom and pain, as well as the visionary who heralds a joyous, liberated future. Syed's own musical composition of the poem exposes this two-fold role of the Pirhaee effectively: the first half is recited, while the second, the "phumni", a communal dance form, is set to a rousing rhythm. Penned in contemporary Pakistan, where the state-led forging of culture privileges the Urdu language and urban, Sunni Muslim identity formations, Syed's "Phumni" invites audience to engage vernacular epistemologies that can galvanize political resistance by remembering ancestral songs and forgotten pasts

Phumni, as told by Nihala Pirhaee by Najm Hosain Syed

Translated by Sara Kazmi

Mayī bheṇā, sarvar jo ūparorñ varṇheya
Thalleorñ sarreya
Ākhai Khizr, Varuñ koi ākhai
Kehan bharāī pānī
Āiyārñ māiyārñ chātī dharat agās dī dāhī
Vāh naitrā, bhā madhānī
Naurn jāg, dhann rīkhan vāliyārñ
Makkhan khalq dā āyā
Sarvar amṛit lassī kar bhoṛerñ
haitho haith vagāyā
Putr māiyārñ de hoē syāne
Vaṭ o velā āyā
Maṭ merñ de kārñ chaṛhāe onhārñ
Bhoṛerñ bhāṇḍā vakhrāyā
Sanjh māiyārñ nu dāyā mañje
Sargī māñjan lāyā
Ūpar samundar, haith Jālandhar
Bhoṛerñ, naīrñ de sāīrñ thī gaye
Daint sadāe
Ūpar valē haith valē nu sadd vagāyā
“Mairñ samundar peyō
Tūrñ putr Jālandhar, vāris maindā”
Paṭh haith mairñ muṇḍī dāhī
Gaṅgā taindrī mayī
Kahai Jālandhar, “abbā, apne andar reh,
Mat pair tūrñ parbat pā
Vekh mairñ gabhrū thī gayā hurñ
Lammā pavārñ tārn sīs Śivālik
Pair meindē Multāne,
Vaṭ o velā āyā
Lākhiārñ daintārñ nu pārorñ
bhaggē devtē takrāe
Māiyārñ onhā napp vyāhiyārñ
Haq walīmā kar ke daint karāe bhartī
Vardiyārñ hor pavāiyārñ
Ro māiyārñ dā
Bhā thiyā vaṭ
Pānī vic samāyā

“Merndī mayī bheṇā jāiyārñ tusārñ dīyārñ”
Sarvar sakhī dī, phumnī khidāvañ
Aj Nihālā āyā
Sarvar raṅg raṅgeyā,
chit chaṭṭā asārñ vī maṅgeyā
Sarvar man tan tūrñ
Jivērñ sadē bol ne havā
Jivērñ sadē kapre ne rūrñ
Jīārñ andar jiṇḍ hoṇvairñ tūrñ
Tain vic mairñ, na tūrñ
Niṭ kajjeyā, niṭ naṅgeyā
Sarvar raṅg raṅgeyā,
chit chaṭṭā asārñ vī maṅgeyā
Vaggiyārñ, saṅg taīndē ral paiyārñ
Nikal Jālandhar, udhal Dharonkāl,
Chor Nighāhā gayārñ
Saṅg saṅg risnā hai, haṛh ho chaṛhnā hai
Chaṛheyārñ torñ lehṇā e,
latheyārñ nu bharaṇā e
Ik kār toye tibbre
Dhuppe labhairē, dhoye libbre
Chaṅg maṇḍeyā, maṇḍ chaṅgeyā
Sarvar raṅg raṅgeyā
Cit chaṭṭā asārñ vī maṅgeyā
Mūt achūt ho Gaṅg jal thīvai
Vaḍhe so taīndrī vel
Supan sarāb vī, jāg trail vī
Āp nakhairā mail
Āpnīyārñ kaṇniyārñ kāṅg banāvairñ
Āp khidāvairñ āp bhirāvairñ
Jor na tor tū saṅgeyā,
Sarvar raṅg raṅgeyā,
cit chaṭṭā asārñ vī maṅgeyā

Sarwar surged from above,
surfaced from below
Some call it 'Khizr,' and others,
they say 'Varun'
The Pirhaeen call it 'water'

The mothers came,
And set down their cask of Earth and Sky.
Air was the string,
Fire, the churn,
Name, the ferment.
They whisked this bounty, and
The butter of Creation emerged.
Sarwar, the undying elixir, seeped deep
into the land,
As buttermilk separated from the curd.

The sons of the mothers grew wise,
And set to work stirring
steaming pots of Self,
They cleaved the land and hearth.
By night, the mothers were tied to beds,
At dawn, they toiled, consigned to chores.

Samundar reigned in the heights,
and Jalandhar, down yonder;
They were masters of land and river,
crowned demi-gods,
Samundar thundered from above:
"I am the father, Samundar.
You are the son,
Jalandhar, my heir.
Crushed beneath my mighty loins,
face-down, lies
Ganga, your mother."
Said Jalandar: "Father,
breach not your bounds,
Do not set foot in the mountains.
You see now, I am a grown man -
My head extends into the Shivalik when I
lie; My feet, sprawl across Multan."
Then came another time,
White-skinned demons from afar

Challenged the dark demi-gods.
They married off the mothers,
Consummated weddings
and sent demi-gods marching,
Dressing them in new uniforms...
The mothers' rage turned into fire
And settled in the water.

'My mothers and sisters were born of you!'
Today, Nihala Pirhaee has come
To dance the phumni of Sarwar Sakhi:

'O many-colored Sarwar,
we too ask for a splash, a sprinkle.
Sarwar, you are body and soul,
As our words are air,
As our clothes are yarn,
You are the Life of the living,
There is no I in you, nor you,
Ever veiled, ever naked...
Gushing forth, we joined with you
Fled Jalandhar, eloped from Dharonkal
We left Nigaha behind
Let us flower together, rise like a storm,
Plunge down from the top,
and fill in the hollows,
Make same, the pit and the pile,
Make spotless, the soiled,
and soil the spotless,
Make good into bad, and bad, good.

May Untouchable piss become
the Ganga spring,
So may your boughs bloom
Both dream-illusion,
And waking perspiration
You are separation, and union,
Joining your droplets in a crashing wave,
You make us play, and yourself,
make us clash,
Break not this bond, o friend,
O many-colored Sarwar, we too ask for a
sprinkle, a splash.



COLOMBOSCOPE

interdisciplinary arts festival