

January 13, 2015

10 am

Narrative, Triggers, Objects and Form: Some Questions

Maya Krishna Rao in conversation with Mandeep Raikhy

With the intention of delving deep into Maya Krishna Rao's process of creation and the politics that inform her work, this conversation focuses on two of Maya's works, *Heads Are Meant for Walking Into* and *A Deep Fried Jam*. It aims to raise questions about narrative, theme, triggers, objects and form, throwing light on the relationship between the body and the mind in her work.

Maya Krishna Rao is a theatre performer, activist and educator, who, starting from her training in Kathakali, ventured into innovative theatre practice. Some of her acclaimed works are The Job, A Deep Fried Jam and Ravanama, among others. Through her use of humour in theatre, Maya has also offered cutting insights into social structures and human nature.

11:30 am

Interpreting Tradition

A Lecture Demonstration by Sharmila Biswas

In this lecture demonstration, Sharmila Biswas explores her understanding of the traditions that constitute Odissi, discussing their interpretation in her work, while reflecting on their relevance to the performing arts scenario. How does a traditional dance form move with the times? For dancers, the existing repertoire and structure of a dance form are the foundation and the backbone. You move ahead by choosing elements from the past, and by absorbing vitality and expressions from people around you. The present work is always an extension of the past and also a reflection of the present society. Finally, each creative artist breathes life into the work by adding her own interpretation and aesthetic vision.

A dancer and choreographer in the Odissi style, Sharmila Biswas is a senior disciple of Kelucharan Mohapatra. Her choreographic work draws on the traditional movement skills of Odisha, giving her the understanding to evolve new forms and expressions within the Odissi dance idiom. This, she finds, helps her make contemporary statements through her work. Sharmila is the founder of the Odishi Vision and Movement Centre, a Kolkata-based institution

dedicated to research, training and performance. She performs extensively, both within and outside the country. In 2012, she received the SNA award for her contributions to the field of Odissi.

1:45 pm

...the thinking and feeling body...

Preethi Athreya in conversation with Sadanand Menon

How to render the non-visible visible, how to render sensate the forces that are themselves not sensate? How does one translate an aural experience into a visual rhythm?

These questions formed the exploration for Preethi Athreya's solo work, *Light Doesn't Have Arms To Carry Us*. The notion has its roots in the theory of haptic vision that Deleuze (2003) introduces in his book on Francis Bacon. Deleuze speaks of haptic vision in relation to Bacon's use of colours, where the sense of sight behaves like the sense of touch. To sense haptically is to experience all those aspects of sensual detection which involve physical contact both inside and outside the body.

In *Light Doesn't Have Arms...*, a musical composition is rendered 'visible' instead of being 'audible'. The task is to create material with movement, text and mime based on the structure of the music and its composition. The objective is to arrive at a visual rhythm based on an aural experience. Through the method of its creation, the work interrogates certain positions regarding the body and the manner in which it is viewed - Can we regard the stage as a space which gives the performer and the viewer a more empathetic experience of the body? Can we capture the poetry of silence? Can we simply allow ourselves to watch a thinking and feeling body?

A contemporary dancer based in Chennai, Preethi Athreya trained in Bharatanatyam under the Dhananjayans. She holds a postgraduate degree in Dance Studies from the Laban Centre, London. Departing from the contours of traditional form, Athreya's work is marked by a constant dialogue with form and content as well as the possibilities of reframing them. She continues to create and teach dance, giving importance to process over product. Her solo creations include Kamakshi (2003), Inhabit (2006), Porcelain (2007), Sweet Sorrow (2010) and Light Doesn't Have Arms to Carry Us (2013). Besides making her own work, since 1999, Athreya has worked with well-known choreographer, Padmini Chettur, in Chennai.

3:15 pm

Open Space

A participant-led space for discussions on topics of interest and enquiry that emerge during the conference or from broader concerns about dance practice. Anyone is welcome to propose a session by stating a clear initial idea that indicates the direction of enquiry the open space will take. Four sessions will be selected by popular vote.

4:15 pm

101 Sessions

The term '101' colloquially refers to a basic overview of any topic. For practitioners in a barebones, under-funded dance environment, being an artist often means being a multifaceted choreographer, performer, PR expert, proposal writer, tech whiz, lawyer and more. The following sessions are short introductions to a few aspects that complement the creative process.

Mary Therese Kurkalang

Outreach, Marketing & Communications in the Arts

The session will give an overview of communications for the arts. How does one reach existing and new audiences, what platforms can be used, how to communicate to different audiences to engage and encourage participation? What are the different tools that can be used for outreach, factoring both small and large budgets as well as in cases where there is zero budget? We will also look at possible and positive ways to market and monetise.

Mary Therese Kurkalang has worked across the arts and publishing, and is the founder and director of KHUBLEI. She set it up in 2012, with the aim of supporting existing arts spaces and practitioners, and encouraging new collaborations by providing consultancy, access to networks, and services to facilitate both ongoing and new projects in the art, books, culture and design space.

Lawrence Liang

Choreographing Copyright: Embodied Knowledge and its challenges to Intellectual Property

Choreography and dance constitute the Bermuda triangle of copyright law where many of its foundational principles (originality, fixation, idea-expression divide) are either simply absent or

inapplicable. Copyright emerged within the history of a specific technology, paper and its ideas of authorship are rooted within the idea of disembodied works, so what happens when it meets an embodied form like dance? If copyright is not particularly suited to address dance, then how may we imagine a legal system for the ownership and /or sharing of knowledge amongst practitioners and performers. In the 101 session I will pose some conceptual questions about the challenges that dance poses to law, and during the clinic, I will follow this up with a hands on, practical discussion.

Lawrence Liang is one of the founders of the Alternative Law Forum, a collective of lawyers based in Bangalore. He works on the intersection of law and culture, with a focus on intellectual property and access to knowledge and culture. He is also completing a book on law, justice and cinema in India.

Rashmi Sawhney

Writing and the Creative Arts: a Contemporary Take

What is the work that writing does for arts practice in our present worlds, where technology has significantly transformed the ecology of arts practice, including its relationship with the written word? If 'contemporary' performance and arts imply a certain critical mode of engaging with, and being in the world, rather than just a time frame, then how can the relationship between writing and arts practice be gauged in contemporary terms? This presentation explores possibilities of recovering, reimagining and redefining the place of writing and arts practice in new ecologies of cohabitation, with a view to opening out speculative conversations on the arts and writing.

Rashmi Sawhney is Associate Professor, Cinema Studies, at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and was previously faculty at the Centre for Transcultural Research and Media Practice, Dublin. She led the India Foundation for the Arts' Curatorship and Arts Practice programmes from 2012-14, including developing archival and museum fellowships to support creative research and curatorial projects. Her area of research, teaching and publication has mainly been cinema and cultural studies, and she is currently working on a project exploring the visual cultures of science fiction in India. She has been interested in creative research and speculative writing, and in practice-based research.

6 pm

Three Questions, Three Discoveries - 1

Mirra Arun

What is the intent that fuels my drive to create? This presentation will focus on the points of shift in my work – the ensuing challenges and learnings and my process of creating movement. It takes one through the trajectory and process of my work *According to Official Sources*.

Mirra has engaged with the movement arts since 2002, starting her career at the Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts. She has been trained in contemporary dance techniques, Kalaripayattu, Bharatanatyam and yoga. She has held movement workshops and performed in international dance festivals in over 12 countries in Europe and Asia. She is also a yoga practitioner and an instructor certified by a1000 yoga. She works extensively in dance in education and is passionate about working on creative dance for children.

Rajyashree Ramamurthi

In 2001, I made my first solo live performance, the culmination of three years of studying on a course titled Dance and Visual Art. Then in 2002, I began to experiment with movement for the camera. What were the conditions that led me to make screen dance work in 2002 for the first time? Taking the above as a starting point, I will discuss essential instances of transformation in my practice, showcasing short works made for single screen presentation.

Rajyashree Ramamurthi is a performance maker, screen dance maker and dance educator who has created solo live performance and screen dance works since 2001. She has showcased her work notably in the UK and Europe in venues such as the Royal Opera House and the Sadler's Wells, London and the Tripostal in Lille, France. Previous editions of Ignite have featured her live and screen dance works.