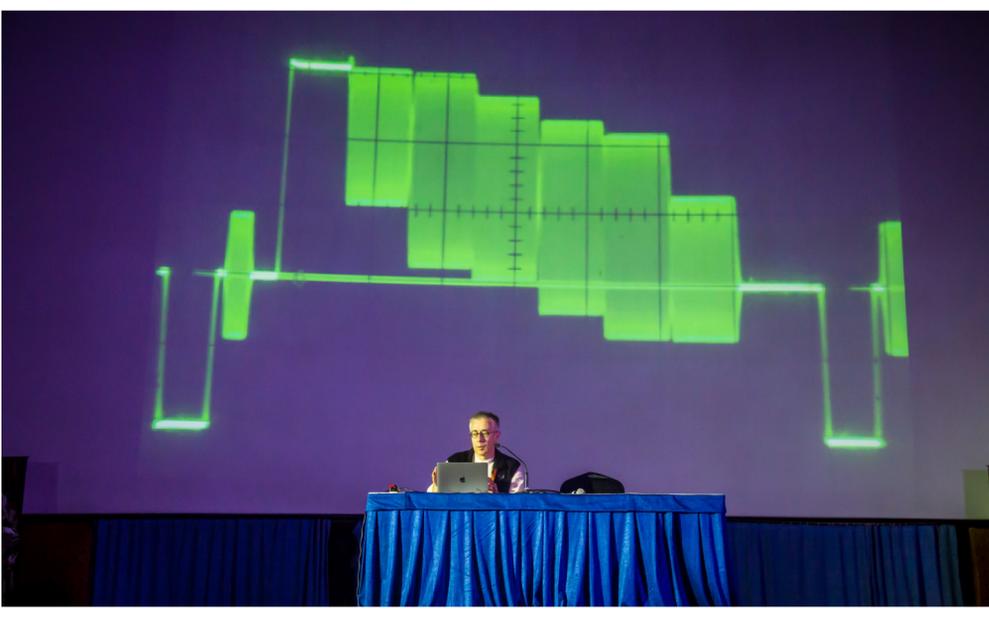


TATA TRUSTS

A quarterly update on the programmes of the portfolio



On March 11, 2021, the digital world in art was shaken seismically as NFTs (or non-fungible tokens) and the crypto currency world entered the contemporary art world, with the sale of Beeple's digital artwork "Everydays: The First 5000 Days" for \$69,346,250 by the auction house Christie's.

"The horror! The horror!"

While the art world reeled, whether because of ignorance of this new entity, or whether because they questioned the quality and subject matter of the art, or whether the new "collectors" were in to park their crypto currency in big stakes, or whether their intentions spelt a new world of fast turnover of high priced art, most didn't seem to focus on the fact that what sold was "unstable" art - rights to a jpeg. Not a print of a jpeg, or a negative or a film out, but a digital image. Through our conservation support of film preservation, the Trusts have helped organisations call out the myths of digital conservation - that it is fool proof, that it is forever, that it is more economical than photo chemical preservation, that we know all the answers of how to preserve it. None of the previous statements are true. The crypto world, the art world, the NFT world need to reflect seriously on a unique ownership being created for something that may not exist a few decades from now, or if this heralds a new era (for a short while) then serious consideration be given to digital conservation.

Digital in art has made it easier to capture, create, and distribute but when it comes to conservation the answers are still in flux, even as technology causes an upheaval every five years or so. The Trusts have worked in support of film preservation (both photochemical and digital) but the product in film, in terms of distribution and sale, is vastly different from an artwork for sale. This is an area of expertise growing slowly. Reto Kromer, a leading practitioner based in Switzerland, taught digital conservation in the Film Heritage Foundation/FIAF film preservation workshops supported by the Trusts.

As questions are thrown up regarding the acquisition of digital works by institutions and museums, the art world and museums need to urgently focus on the long term implications of anything digital, and the high cost of preserving what is still an unstable entity.

In this newsletter we highlight the Mumbai Police Foundation grant, for conservation and archiving a sensitive archive. The program design had to address the huge number of articles that needed attention, limited resources in both people and budget, and the time duration involved in the securing all the articles. This would take years, so to place external conservators and archivists would have increased the budget. Instead, police officers, were recruited from the force and trained. Modules were made, both in text and in video, so that, there remained a documentation of best practices to continually refer to. In one year, a cadre of officers donned new hats as conservators. While the work is ongoing, now, by the police officers themselves, future funding is being sought from the National Archives of India. This could be a model that could be adopted by institutions with large archives.

As the pandemic continues and a second wave is upon us, performance venues are still to fully open. We highlight two institutions supported through fellowships, Ninasam and Kattaikuttu Sangam, as Covid has slowed down programs or made a reworking of priorities necessary.

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Mumbai Police Archives

Looking back, a year later, at how the Trusts support enabled the preservation of an institutional archive

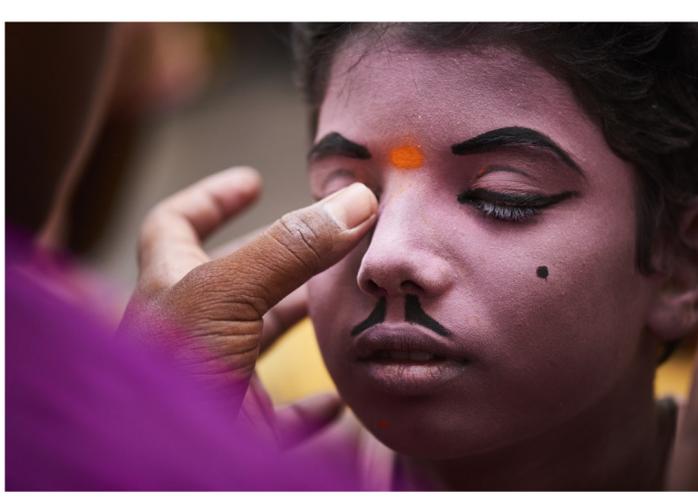
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Supporting regional theatre practices via a fellowships model

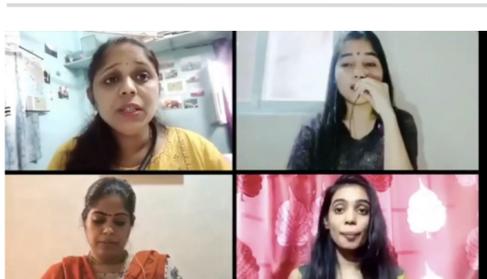
Established in 1949, **NINASAM** (Nilakanteshwara Natyaseva Sangha) – a cultural and theatre institute – has been an active proponent of cultural discourse, theatre training and theatre production in Karnataka. With support from the Trusts since 2013, Ninasam has been able to bring in, through a fellowships model, new practices into its curriculum and ensure a continuous evolution of its theatre practice. Divided into Senior and Junior fellowship categories, 40+ artists and theatre production experts were invited to undertake intensive workshops on acting, direction, speech, culture studies, design, theatre music and lighting. These fellows worked towards training of students in the Ninasam Theatre Institute, conducting technical workshops and directing productions enabling an infusion of perspective and knowledge – both theoretical and practical – for the students and faculty at the institute. Tirugata – Ninasam's theatre repository – has been responsible for disseminating these new productions and ideas (performed in Kannada but adapting the best from western and regional plays) across villages in towns in Karnataka through the months of October and March when they tour every year.



Fusing theatre practice and formal education

Kattaikuttu Gurukulam, supported by Tata Trusts for a period of three years, focusses on a holistic model of development and education, while offering professional training in the heritage theatre art of Kattaikuttu. With approximately 50 students residing on-campus, hailing from five districts in Tamil Nadu and coming from some of the most disadvantaged communities in the state, the curriculum is designed to offer formal education as well

as professional artistic training in Kattaikuttu. These trained students perform overnight performances, as is tradition, in rural and urban settings, bringing to the audience a unique experience of storytelling. The Gurukulam has opened up training for both women and men in Kattaikuttu – a theatre form that traditionally only employed men – and their various initiatives ensure that the students are able to live a life of dignity as artists and working professionals. In March 2002, having successfully trained a batch of 50 students, the Gurukulam model was phased out to be replaced with a "vision to becoming an indigenous Kattaikuttu Knowledge Centre".



Inspire India students perform as part of Shankar Mahadevan Academy's 10th year celebrations

Students from the Trusts supported Inspire India Project, performed online, as part of a special concert on February 28th 2021. The event also celebrated the success of the Inspire India project, its many stakeholders and students that performed Hindustani Classical Music, popular songs and the keyboard.

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Tata Trusts supported IFA fellow Priya Sen's installation work "Seevalak's Echochamber"

Priya Sen received a grant under IFA's Archival and Museums Fellowships programme supported by the Trusts, to work with the Centre at the Allis Archive & Research Centre for Ethnomusicology, Gurgaon. The sound and text installation "Seevalak's Echochamber" was one of the outputs of the project and can be viewed below.

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Image Credit (from the top): Film Heritage Foundation, Mumbai; Mumbai Police Foundation, Mumbai; NINASAM, Heggodu; Kattaikuttu Sangam, Kanchipuram; Shankar Mahadevan Academy, Mumbai; India Foundation for the Arts, Bangalore

Previous editions of the newsletters can be accessed [here](#)

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