Virtual Nursery

| REMOTE RESIDENCY | FOUR MONTHS | SEPTEMBER - JANUARY |

Content

POLLINATOR.io

VIRTUAL NURSERY 01

exhibition

FISSURE

Virtual Nursery 2020 - 2021

Virtual Nursery is a humble initiative by Pollinator to understand what a residency can do virtually in the context of present times, how it can impact creators and makers in their thinking process, how we can let go of certain mandated structures and requirements of traditional artist residencies. To broaden our scope, this is an attempt to create an inclusive residency on as many fronts as we can. We seek to emphasize on rethinking the arts and creative practices in the virtual context by concentrating more on what one can create going forward, rather than rest on accolades of what one has already created.

Pollinator is an agency that seeds fundamental debates through intangible value systems. With the evolving times, we intend to diversify our peer ecosystem through cross-pollination. Through our first project "Collection Bureau" in 2017, the duo of Thukral and Tagra in collaboration with Prayas Abhinav, tried to critique the process through which the value of a work is formulated and established in the art context. What are the markers of such a value of a work of art? Is there any system that can access the work of art through a distinctive currency? Can a work be collected or a collection be built by overlooking the monetary framework?

Going forward with the idea of looking into the value systems to build it into a coherent collection, the team of Pollinator initiated the collection of articulations of an object, service or sentiment offered in response to the volatile climate and atrocities across the country in the beginning of 2020. The team addressed the ideas of 'hate and concern' by exchanging the ideas of 'care'. This project - "Nafrat/ Parvah" at POND, New Delhi, was not a site of protest, rather a safe space to expand our understanding of the verb "hate" through vocabularies, aesthetics, and value systems of the antagonistic force.

As Pollinator has always placed itself as a catalyst for interdisciplinary actions and reactions to the present time, the third project "Solitude" aimed at small exercises at the times of isolation to make people think of ways to create new dimensions during these tough

times. The exercises are meditative with a pinch of darkness which is so evident in today's social paradigm.

To curate Pollinator's 4th project and its first residency "FISSURE", we invited Shaleen Wadhwana - Arts Educator, as our Guest Pollinator.

FISSURE

Fissure means
"To split,"
"A state of incompatibility or disagreement," or
"The beginning of a crack."

There are multiple ways to interpret fissure. For Pollinator 2020, we are focussing on fissures in the recent timeline of global and local human history. It ranges from the Pandemic, the damaging and healing effects of varying degrees of social isolation to large scale movements for human rights and protests against violence caused by hate, bias, fear.

In these ruptures, we have witnessed the extent of human compassion through global cooperation. We have faced the undeniable fact that some have much more than they need and many do not have the bare basic minimum for sustained survival. We, as a community, are in a moment of fissure, and how we respond to this determines how we are remembered in history.

Through the Virtual Nursery, Pollinator will delve into how 'bias' and 'fear' are understood in art, history, and contemporary society, in relation to the fissures that have been, and are being created around us.

The virtual exhibition welcomes you to interact with the artworks by residents Deepikah R Bharadwaj, Ani Dalal and Sneha Joshi created in response to the curatorial prompt : 'Fissure.' Through the curriculum designed for this Residency, we attempted to understand how artistic practices can expand their vantage points to address the evolving biases and fear in their contemporary society. We mapped the timeline of socio-political milestones from the 19th century to 2020 with the artworks, artists and movements that responded to them, and assessed their

Shaleen Wadhwana | *Art Educator & Curater*

symbiotic relationship. Through this framework and contextual lens, SarvSatvikRashtra - Atmanirbhar 2Q48 is a purity driven alternate reality by Deepikah which confronts the viewer with a cuisine free of 'other'-ised elements. In contrast to that, Lost in a Dreamscape by Ani invites us to pause in his panopticon-like universe, which showcases our innermost child-like dreams with progressive life-stage demons 'outgrowing' them. Lastly, The Missing Link by Sneha questions the lack of accessibility in this increasingly digitally dependent world operating on an able-bodied centric design.

Guest Pollinator | Curator
Shaleen Wadhwana

She is academically trained in History, Art History, Liberal Arts, and Cultural Heritage Law, and lies at the intersection of art, history, heritage and culture. She has professional expertise of working across museums and galleries. Currently, her independent pedagogical practice includes teaching, curating and writing about South Asian history, art and culture to bring audiences closer to it. Also, she is the Humanities Curriculum Designer, linking the worlds of Design Futures and Big History. She frequently writes about the impact of technology on art, and the links between art and public spaces.

Resident Ani Dalal

Artist statement
Lost in a Dreamscape

Past experiences of media-based trophic cascades such as swayed elections, mob lynching and economic disruption have proven time and again that technology and media hold an unprecedented power to affect communities and their decision making. And as we enter this new decade, we are a little bit closer towards the grand vision of a digital singularity. So the lingering questions remain at the fringe. Is the idea of a digital singularity utopian or dystopian in nature? How do alternatives exist in the presence of a singularity? Or can we call this process towards singularity a way to colonize the decolonized? Fresh out of the Terraforming trip, as a Designer and Researcher, I became curious about the Indian

ANI DALAL

context. What is the Indian context? I ask the question not just in terms of natural or artificial infrastructure but also the diversity of the meta and virtual reality constructed by the people. So, the question inherently becomes a question of identity. My initial proposal in response to the 'Fissure' - curatorial prompt by Virtual Nursery was about the geo aesthetics of fissure. During the past four months, the perspective through which I was trying to investigate the idea of the Indian context shifted from the external to the internal.

Individuals make up any form of identity and looking back at history, the core of the Indian context seems to be mostly about multiplicity - juxtaposition of cultures, technology, and infrastructure over large and small periods of time. "A baby is born. The kid dreams. And the person runs."

Over time the individual actor's meta, virtual and material reality evolve as does one's position in the planetary sensorium or the planetary stack. As time is the only invariant in this ontological transformation of the individual context, dreams become an interesting lens to get some insights into the shifting context. For one, unlike the material and virtual reality, the meta reality often escapes the reflective archiving in the virtual reality. It's all in one's head. How do we capture something so abstract, something that is very fickle and diverse?

And such questions are what I try to explore via my artwork 'Lost in a Dreamscape.' Hence, I created a form asking people 'What do you dream about?'. The form focused on the content that dreams are made of, artefacts from the plane of immanence, floating around in our subconscious. And using such artefacts, I created a dreamscape, an alternate universe that viewers can interact with. By treating the internet as a schizo medium and breaking out of the predefined norms of standardized user interactions, the experience attempts to create an alternate imagination of an interface that could exist but does not. What do a dream, a maze and a doom scroll (endlessly scrolling through your social media feed) have in common? The process of getting lost despite the diversity of the medium ranging from the meta to the material to the virtual. Sometimes the individual is

LOST IN A DREAMS-CAPE

ANI DALAL

lost because of a lack of a final destination, and sometimes one is lost due to lack of direction to the desired destination. And it is okay to be lost, for the only way forward is through.

Artwork Description

Artwork: http://lostinadreamscape.com/
Title: Lost in a Dreamscape
Medium: Interactive digital environment (Text, Images, Audio, 3D, custom code)
The digital platform/code is used in this experience to provide users with a dreamscape, a navigable virtual environment cluttered with reactive artefacts from people's dreams. Webcam and audio is used to run a quirky audio reactive reflection inside one of the objects.
Year: 2020-2021

This interactive experience created by Ani Dalal emulates the feeling of being lost in dreams, mazes and doom scrolls. It invites the users/participants to interact with an imaginary ecosystem. It presents users with a fictional world consisting of interactive elements that do not follow the usual principles of the interfaces people generally engage with on a daily basis. The experience provides a glimpse into a few of the events of 2020, indicating the recent fissures in the indian context. The fictional world is created by the artist from the responses received by the users to the prompt 'What do you dream about?,' enabling users to also participate in the growth of the project.

Instructions to Navigate

To interact with the artwork visit:
http://lostinadreamscape.com/ on a desktop or a laptop. Use W-A-S-D letter keys to fly around in the dreamscape. Use your mouse pointer to control the direction in which you are flying. Click on the 3D objects to interact with the experience. The artwork also needs access to mic and camera to ensure a better experience. No unauthorized recording/data sharing takes place as everything happens in your browser.

Ani Dalal *is a researcher/designer based out of Bangalore. Working at the intersection of speculation and media. Ani uses digital technology as his medium to create experiences and narratives.*

Resident Deepikah Rahul Bhardwaj

Artist statement
Sarv Satvik Rashtra - Atmanirbhar 2Q48

The curatorial prompt of 'Fissure' by Pollinator made me think about how we have been in a soup of unsettling events since 2014. Starting December 2019, social activists, lawyers, human rights advocates, and those that valued Indian constitutional ideals like secularism protested on the streets of the country against the government policies which discriminated against people on the basis of religion. I was deeply disturbed by the images of violence coming from all over the country and could not fathom the absurdity of this reality.

My immediate response for the Virtual Nursery residency was to distill the protest against the jarring laws/bills to its crux - who is deemed to be an 'outsider' in the definition of a majoritarian/ authoritarian nation state and apply it to the most basic of human requirements - food. This led me to understand the so-called 'purity' through the lens of food. The country I grew up in was accommodating and kebab eating. And now I observe how identities have been weaponized to feed propaganda of increasing intolerance. The apartment rental adverts that specify no minority or non-vegetarians allowed. A person refusing delivery from a Zomato delivery man belonging to a minority group. The ban on beef. I find the ambiguity and the insensitivity of the State towards its people and natural resources, combined with deep conditioning of people towards hating the "other" both absurd and post-logic.

Why and how did personal food preferences become a part of religion? After all, according to the US-based anthropologist, Balmurli Natrajan, and India-based economist, Suraj Jacob, only 20% Indians are vegetarian. How is this more important than focusing on the impending ecological disasters of pollution or climate change? I had multiple conversations with historians, food writers and artists throughout the course of the Residency which helped shape these ideas into an inquiry - What happens to food when radical majoritarian propaganda succeeds? What does "purity" mean in an Indian context ? What is understood by purely Indian identity?

DEEPIKAH RB

As food historian Sohail Hashmi noted in a conversation with me over a video call on 31st October, 2020 at 3:30 pm, a visit to any Vaishnav Dhaba will reveal a menu with three categories - Indian, South Indian and Chinese. This raises the question, what is categorized as Indian food? And can eleven dishes of paneer really be considered Indian when paneer is infact a Portuguese invention? The creation of a post-truth speculative world is a product of these overlapping voices of reason in my head that needed a world of their own to be comprehended.

SarvSatvikRashtra - Atmanirbhar 2Q48 is based in an alternate fictional society which focuses on its food mannerisms through ideas of 'shuddhi' (purity). Inspired by Murakami's 1Q84, SarvSatvikRashtra is an alternate reality that coexists but is different from the one you are in. For I believe that many realities exist in the same world based on where one is standing. In this world, the very survival of the human race is threatened by extreme weather conditions and overconsumption. The ruling regime in this society continues to focus on it's definition of shuddhi, which is considered to be the highest virtue of this society. "Shuddhi for all" is a salute like "Heil Hitler" used across the narrative to reinforce the importance given to purity. Using the lens of food, I attempt to recreate the feeling of being wronged by erroneous policies and propaganda. How does it feel when it hits too close to home?

Shuddhi For All

Artwork Description

Artwork: https://sarvsatvikrashtra.com/
Title: Sarv Satvik Rashtra - Atmanirbhar 2Q48
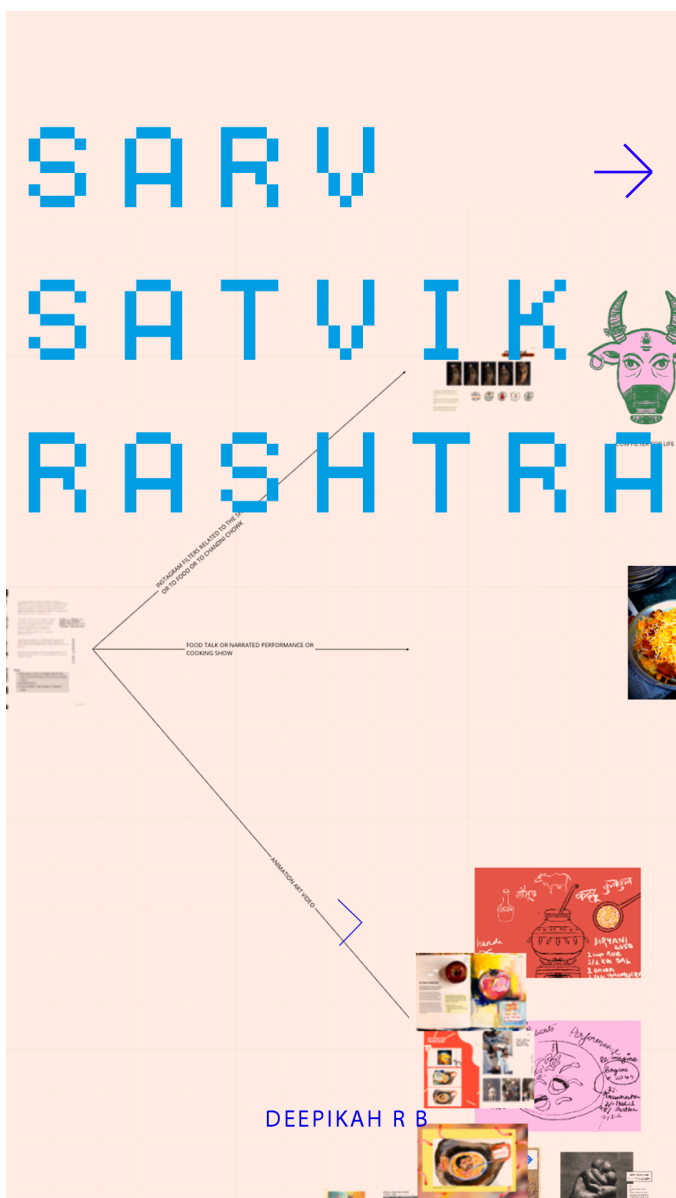**Medium:** Interactive Video Art
Graphic design, 3D animation, Acrylic on paper - Hand painted artworks. Adventr.io interactive video platform, frame by frame animation, motion design, sound and voice design.
Size: Size variable as per viewing device
Duration: 2 minutes
Year: 2020-2021

This interactive online experience by Deepikah R B is based in a speculative alternate society: The Sarv Satvik

Rashtra and its focus on mandatory mannerisms around food. It invites users to interact with an imaginary food machine, the Atmanirbhar 2Q48, by asking them to pick their favourite dish which produces the desired food item. This interactive experience intertwines impending ecological fissures, growing fascism, ongoing pandemic and the overbearing frustration with the virtual only world. There is no correct choice in a world of errors, ambiguity and garishness.

Instructions to navigate the artwork

This is an interactive video. Please click to play the video and press instructional buttons in the video to navigate. Turn up your volume. English Captions are provided wherever possible.
For the ideal interactive experience, view on a desktop or laptop.
If viewing on a phone please rotate your phone to landscape mode.
Shuddhi For All.

Deepikah Rahul Bhardwaj *is an interdisciplinary artist based in Bangalore, India. Trained in Communication design from Delhi, she uses painting and installation art to express issues related to gender, self-worth, body dysmorphia, social conditioning and perception.*

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Resident Sneha Joshi

Artist statement
The Missing Link

The curatorial prompt for Virtual Nursery was timely as it urged a strong critical reflection on the way we were living, and for me it also questioned how we are to move forward from that point on in July 2020.
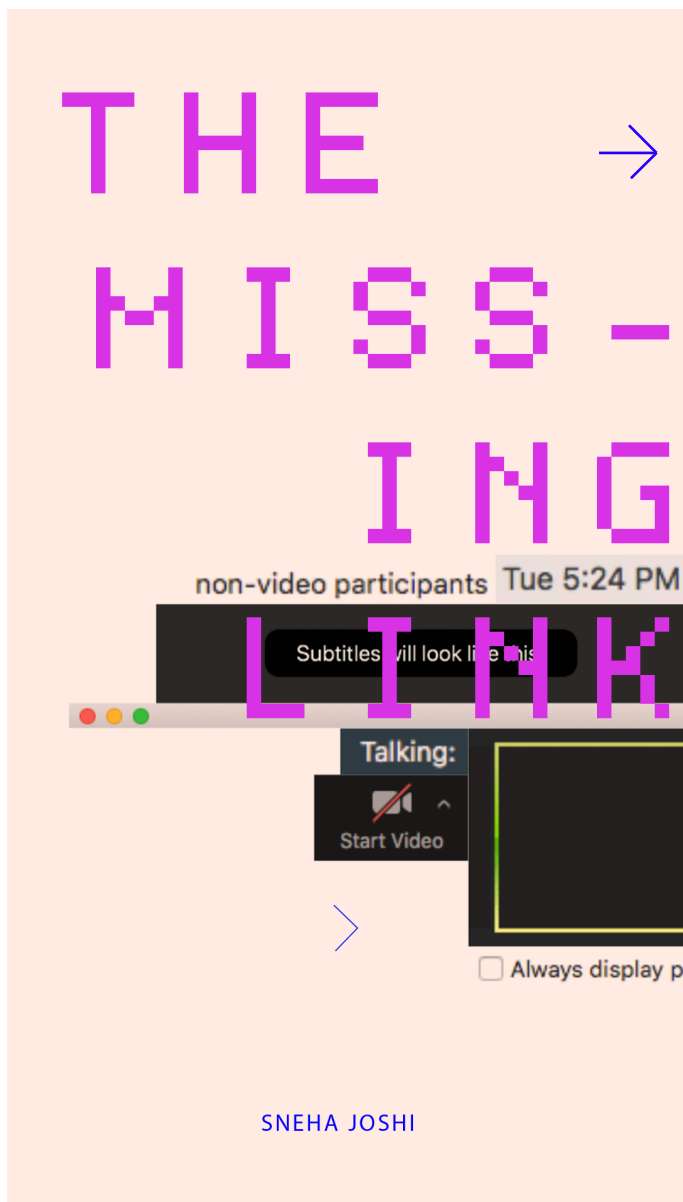
As the sibling of an individual with disabilities, I found myself reflecting on The International Day of Disabled Persons 2019 which was themed "The Future is Accessible" - evoking the dream of an inclusive world. However, in 2020 we were faced with a different future from what we had envisioned then. What this crack or fissure had revealed was the increasing disparity within inclusive physical, and now digital, spaces of gathering. This moment in time had exposed the ignorance with which we come together in digital spaces, as we had been compelled to do so. It brought to light a lack of accessibility in the digital spaces; no use of closed captions, audio descriptions or sign language interpretation to name a few, when it came to virtual seminars, talks and gatherings. This was especially and glaringly true in the Indian context in comparison to America- or Europe-based online events I attend during the lockdown in India. Through my work during the residency, my aim was to point out two things. One, awareness of the fact that accessibility features are available on popular digital platforms used globally that are not being made use of. Two, in many digital spaces, accessibility tools for the diasbled population are absent and hence, this content becomes inaccessible for them. The intention behind my project is also to raise awareness in the minds of able bodied individuals, who may take their digital interactions for granted, that there is a spectrum of users who access information in different ways. Maybe this awareness about how able centric our experiences are will help encourage more widespread use of accessibility tools and lead to greater development as well as integration of the same.

I began the residency with a focus on exploring digital infrastructures for gathering online and investigating the hierarchies they perpetuate through their visual frameworks, which embody our presence, frame our

SNEHA JOSHI

interactions, and dictate our participation in digital spaces. I am interested in the structures and dynamics of power that are invisibly embedded within the design of our culture and society, as intentionally designed environments online. In this context, aspects of interface act as forms of control which need to be understood and uncovered in order to move away from dominant ableist cultures. For example, on a popular video conferencing software, the faces of participants who speak more often appear at the top of the table. Similarly information provided in chat windows, such as PDF files, are not always read out loud or accompanied with audio descriptions and hence, might not always be accessible for users who are not dependent on sight to use technology. As able bodied individuals, our interactions with technology are highly sight based, but are all softwares supportive of providing an alternate mode of access? This bias creates barriers that result in the exclusion of many individuals. Accessibility can be a range of things, and bridging the accessibility divide is important because technology empowers us to do more. Accessibility should be a human right as proclaimed by tech giant Apple, which is lauded for its focus on creating inclusive infrastructures.

Through 'The Missing Link', I explore ways to create a narrative through the use of "buttons" and other digital features which we commonly encounter on the screen. Subverting the function of commonly encountered digital features on the screen became a way for me to play with the dynamics of power and control in our interaction and relation with technology. The intention is to reinterpret digital functions in a new or different way, through the lens of a disabled tech user, in order to critique or comment on the same in digital environments. 'The Missing Link' has therefore been developed as an interactive, participatory experience for the viewer. It comprises audio, video and text, and is highly performative in nature. The audience can navigate their way through this in order to discover a new perspective, foraging an informed awareness of their relationship with technology. In this regard, the project is created with an able bodied audience in mind. With this awareness on the rise, we can hope for the bridging of the accessibility divide and make technology inclusive in the truest sense.

THE →
MISS-
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LINK

non-video participants   Tue 5:24 PM

Subtitles will look like this

Talking:

Start Video

Always display p

SNEHA JOSHI

Artwork Description

Artwork - https://www.themissinglinkproject.com/
Title - The Missing Link
Medium - custom audio, video and text, found GIFs
Year - 2020 - 2021

In The Missing Link, Sneha Joshi brings our attention to a new way of interacting and relating with the screen and the information it presents. She does so by highlighting accessibility features offered on our devices or through various digital platforms, as well as by subverting functions of common digital features in a playful manner. The project aims at highlighting the lack of usage of accessibility features on digital platforms, even when they do exist, or the lack of accessibility tools altogether in digital environments which are required by users with varied needs. Viewers will navigate through the website to participate in varied experiences. These will engage a range of senses, such as hearing through audio feedback and voice over commands, moving away from highly sight dependent interactions with the screen.

Instructions to Navigate the work

Use the buttons on each page to help guide you through the work. Each page contains one or more buttons which will help you navigate from one screen to another. I urge you to explore each page on your screen by moving the pointer around, over the different objects and elements presented to discover their function or where they might take you. On some pages, you may not notice a button right away. In such a situation, find the button by moving the cursor over the elements on the page or by scrolling down to the end of the page. Some links might take you to a new window to experience a part of the project in another web location. Once you have explored this, please return to the main project window.
Avoid using the browser's back button and follow the buttons on the site instead to fully experience the work in the intended manner. The work is performative in nature and hence I request that you spend time listening to all the audio bytes and watch the videos that are a part of the website for a holistic experience. Please spend time on each page, exploring and observing what it has to offer.

This website is designed for optimal viewing and experiencing on your laptop or desktop. Please avoid viewing the site on your phone or tablet.
***Warning:** The following website contains flashing images, text and colours.

Sneha Joshi *is a multidisciplinary contemporary artist and curator based in Bangalore, India. Her overarching practice focuses on challenging perceptions around sociocultural norms in the Indian and global context. She is interested in the creation and sharing of knowledge produced through conversations, mediated over varied sources and platforms with an interest in publishing.*

→ **Read more about Pollinator's various projects at pollinator.io**