



PROBING

probing the khojness of khoj [nancy adajania](#)

THE KHOJNESS OF KHOJ

The coming together of any group of creative minds must be celebrated as a festival of the imagination. The advent of the Khoj International Artists' Workshop in 1997, with the formation of a working group comprising six artists and a gallery director, is such a benchmark in the history of postcolonial Indian art.¹

Most of the artists' groups or collectives that made an impact on the Indian art scene between the 1950s and the 1990s were either voluntary associations, pressure groups or avant-garde fronts. Many of them withered away or suffered abrupt demise. Their short lifespan notwithstanding, these initiatives generated productive conversations and alternative spaces of encounter outside the gallery system and state-sponsored art institutions. All of these groupings were born from an ideological impulse or responded to a strongly perceived practical need. But, as the Indian manifestation of a portable model of transcultural artistic conviviality, Khoj is an exception to this rule. Based on a concept developed by the Triangle Arts Trust founded in New York, in 1982, by the British sculptor Anthony Caro and art collector Robert Loder,² Khoj presented itself from the outset as a prognostication and possibility. It looked forward to a utopian situation of dialogue among artists from different contexts, who would not otherwise have come into contact with one another.

The achievement of the Khoj model is that it has transformed the lives and work of its practitioners. It has anticipated and provided for the consequences of the mobility that globalisation has imparted to Indian artists in the postcolonial world. By amplifying their context from nation to region to globe, Khoj has produced a valuable platform and network – one that gives them the latitude, the depth of field and the tactical flexibility to deal with a range of emerging art-historical provocations. Khoj has made them aware, over the years, of possibilities that they can pursue, artistic choices that they can empower themselves to make. And thus, in an art situation that was for nearly four decades many steps behind its Western point of reference, Khoj registered, for the first time, the sensation of being many steps ahead. Its emphasis on process, rather than product, liberated artists from the commodity focus of the gallery system; its lively laboratory atmosphere brought Indian cultural producers into close communion with colleagues from other countries, breaking down the nation-centric self-discourse then in force.

The idea that one could work elsewhere, or collaborate with contemporaries from other societies, began to assume a reality. Regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, which Indian artists had virtually ignored under the influence of a Western ascendancy, now became

part of their active world-picture. Sculptors were able to experiment with installations, painters with ephemeral performances; the rudiments of interactive and public art were set in place.

In the process, the artists who have renewed Khoj with every annual edition, and who have participated in its growth, have negotiated numerous modifications of the template they inherited from the Triangle Arts Trust. They have brought to this template the desires and local exigencies that drive their practice.

managing that unpredictable thing called art

As a dynamic collective evolving into a cultural institution, Khoj is larger than the sum of the individual artists who run it. This is just as well in a country such as India, where the leadership model is a charismatic one: institutions, especially in the cultural sector, tend to revolve around powerful individuals; when these individuals fade from the scene or pass away, their institutions collapse or fall into desuetude. Perhaps this is the point at which to spell out the ways in which Khoj is a unique form, irreducible to other collective approaches.

First, Khoj is a feat of cultural management in a society that does not believe in managing its cultural expressions efficiently, vacillating as it does between a marketing cult of genius and an ethos of coarse indifference. This may surprise the reader who regards Khoj as an ‘artist-run initiative’. To my mind, it is more truly an association of artists catalysed, facilitated and sustained by a cultural manager. The Indian art scene has little serious understanding of the formative role to be played by such cultural agents as critics, curators, conservationists, archivists and cultural managers, who are all regarded as intermediaries between the sublime artist and the vast public. In truth, these intermediaries bear the responsibility of transforming impulse into cogency, of creating contexts in which individual artistic projects can fulfil themselves.

Thus, in the Khoj narrative, Pooja Sood has played the pioneering role of a cultural manager – and it is arguable that the importance of her contribution unfolded itself only gradually, even to her, rather than by design.³ Her dual education in art history and management may have given her a special purchase, allowing for an intuitive grasp of emerging patterns in the fast-changing India of the late 1990s. The cultural manager has emerged as a figure who can serve as the permanent axis of the organisation, even as the artists come and go, dividing their time between their own work and their Khoj commitment in varying ratios.

Second, Khoj is not a one-off or stand-alone performance; rather, it is part of a global network of initiatives linked by family resemblances of motivation and similarities in structure and project execution. Thus, it does not exist in isolation but gains constantly – whether in intellectual capital or the flow of visiting artists or stimuli for innovation – from its continuous interaction with counterparts elsewhere in the distributive system of the Triangle Arts Trust. This creates a corporate permanence based on accountability and benchmarking that can endure, as against the necessarily limited life cycle of initiatives founded on shifts of ideology within a tight circle, or on the current interests of participants, which they may well outgrow.

‘freedom from’ or ‘freedom towards’

All advances in art since the 1880s have invariably been expressed as articulations of a freedom – which is a ‘freedom from’, that is, freedom from the constraints of prior modes of art-making, framing or institutionalisation. It could be argued that a conceptual problem haunts this sense of freedom – it is always freedom *from* something, a claim to leaving something behind that is, nevertheless, a continuing enslavement to that which is said to have been left behind. The distance sought to be mapped by leaving behind is always defined by the source, not the journey or the destination. In this

context, I would cite J Krishnamurti’s central teaching as a guide: ‘Freedom is something that is in the living active present, in daily life. Freedom is not freedom from something – freedom from something is merely a reaction.’⁴

Most avant-garde groups and practitioners react violently to past art practices rather than, in Krishnamurti’s words, ‘dying to the past’ and affirming the present. Dying to the past does not mean obliterating the past, but dealing with it constructively and putting it behind us. It means performing life – and art – in the spirit of what he calls ‘freedom towards’ something (this is easier said than done).

The imaginative freedom that Khoj made possible in the 1990s marked a departure from the script that had been written for Indian artists since Independence. From the 1950s onward, artists in India had had to contend with a menaced sense of self, suffering nationalist critique and inner doubt as they fashioned their identity from materials that were fugitive, fragmentary and sometimes contradictory. They were trying, at once, to assert themselves as artists free of social convention, citizens of a new nation-state, and internationalists with a claim to the heritage of Western art. In their local context, they escaped the assigned roles of portraitist, society painter and national mouthpiece, while also erasing the lingering associations of art with the folk-artisanal tradition. And while they treated the vocation of ‘modern art’ with a seriousness almost religious in its intensity, they had no source of patronage except the nascent gallery circuit and the modernising Nehruvian state. Thus, and cruel as it may sound to say it, their autonomy was compromised by the very circumstances of its birth.

For more than four decades after Independence, a majority of Indian artists asserted their autonomy in a rather curious manner – by making paintings and sculptures that aspired to a universal internationalist style (which was not, in fact, internationalist, but West-centric) acceptable to galleries. This is perhaps one of the reasons why Indian art never had its own version of Gutai, the Japanese art movement of the 1950s and 1960s, whose

members turned paintings into performance props, and whose performances radicalised the relationship between artwork and audience. Since the Indian modernist aesthetic privileged the individuality of the artistic self, it precluded the formation of communicative relationships between the studio artist and other cultural agents of the public sphere. These exclusions were not addressed until the 1990s, and were left virtually untouched even by the postmodernists who emerged in Mumbai and Baroda during the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁵

Against this backdrop, it would be useful to study the questions and debates that emerged from the artists’ collectives that preceded Khoj, the similarities and differences of approach, rhetoric and execution among them. This is not going to be a simple chronology of their aims and missteps, since each had a core competency that we could absorb and take further into our discussion of Khoj. However, I would exclude from my present purview such groupings as the Calcutta Group (Calcutta, early 1940s to early 1950s), the Progressive Artists’ Group (Bombay, late 1940s to mid-1950s), the Delhi Silpi Chakra (Delhi, late 1940s to late 1960s), and Astitva (Bombay, 1970s). These groupings either addressed themselves to the ideal of artistic autonomy in opposition to the weave of the larger cultural situation, or conducted their discussions of cultural practice in private. Importantly, none of these groups saw their mission as that of developing a region-specific contemporary, even when they sometimes claimed this. Rather, they aimed to acclimatise Indian artists into the environment of international art. Even so, some of them produced infrastructure and discourse as a result of their quest. The Progressives participated in the Bhulabhai Institute, a multidisciplinary arts centre in Bombay; the Delhi Silpi Chakra helped found an exhibition space that later became Dhoomimal, India’s first private art gallery; Astitva’s intense inner-group discussions resulted in Prabhakar Barwe’s artistic testament, *Kora Canvas*.

While the discourse of these groups was inward and closed, I shall be

With all their energies concentrated on ‘freedom from’ the past, they never got their act going in the present.

In 1966, the artist-pedagogue KCS Paniker founded an artists’ village complex in Cholamandal, near Chennai. The artists were provided with residential and studio spaces, and could make craftworks for a living. While many academy-trained Indian artists had rigidly maintained their ‘autonomous’ position in society since the 1950s, this was the first time that the vocation of an artist was given practical shape as a workable livelihood model woven into a local economy. Paniker viewed the artist not as an isolated genius but as a cultural producer playing in a gamut of spaces, from studio solitude to marketplace solidarity. He provided for a stable economic situation that could sustain greater sociality between artists and society at large. Later, Cholamandal also organised international art residencies. Its ‘freedom towards’ was scored in the progressive politics of a critical regionality, but it gradually fell prey to the vagaries of the narrowly provincial. The criticality ebbed away, the regionality gained in strength and obduracy; once complacency set in, life improved but art deteriorated.

In 1968, the debates around nationalism and internationalism, which had exercised Indian artists since Independence, were brought to a head when India’s national academy for the visual arts, the Lalit Kala Akademi, inaugurated the Triennale-India in Delhi under Mulk Raj Anand’s visionary leadership. Poet, art critic and distinguished arts editor, Anand was a bridge figure between writers and artists, a cultural producer who shaped the Indian art world. He fully subscribed to the Nehruvian project of international solidarity among progressive forces. In February 1968, he invited John Berger to contribute to the Triennale catalogue; Berger responded with an essay emphasising the power of modern art to oppose imperialism and to create an alliance of resistance across the world. We must remember that this event was staged at the height of the war in Vietnam, with the Cold War framing the revolutionary anti-colonial struggles that were under way in many

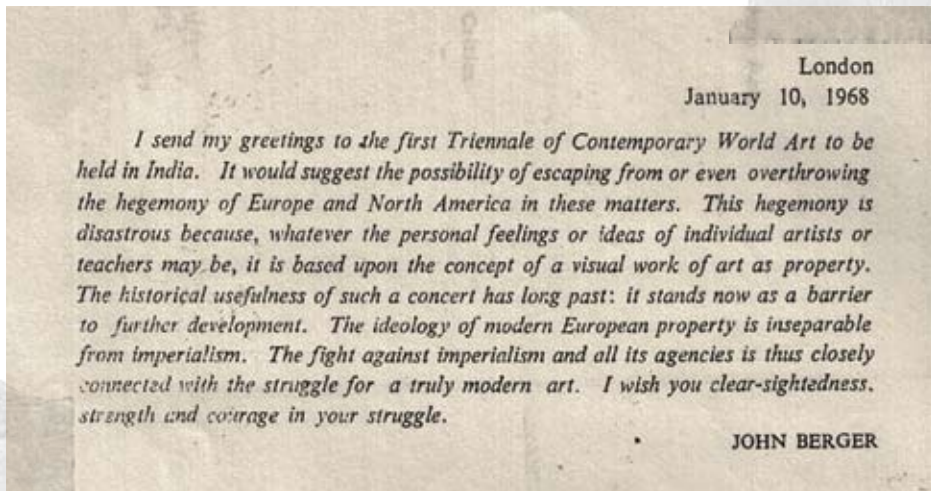
critically examining artists’ groups such as Group 1890, Cholamandal, the Vision-Exchange Workshop and the Kasauli Art Centre, among others, which discoursed outwardly, reflecting on the relationship between art-making and other cultural practices, and the interface between art activity and an emergent public sphere. These groups operated in that intermediate space of sociality between the artists’ circle as an elite on the one hand, and such institutionalised forms as the academy and the state-sponsored cultural agency on the other. With varying degrees of success, they committed their energies to sustaining a culture of conversation and creative pedagogy that could, in turn, inform cultural production.

Group 1890, a formation that included J Swaminathan, Jeram Patel, Ambadas, Himmat Shah, Gulammohammed Sheikh, Jyoti Bhatt and others, announced its manifesto in 1963. They seem to have been committed to the project of a cultural modernity that was at once indigenous, autonomous and contemporary. They certainly did not believe in leaving anything to chance, rubbishing all the dominant schools of art, past and present. Sample this from their manifesto: ‘From its early beginnings in the vulgar naturalism of Ravi Varma and the pastoral idealism of Bengal school, down through the hybrid mannerisms resulting from the imposition of concepts by successive movements in modern European art on classical, miniature and folk styles, to the flight into “abstraction” in the name of cosmopolitanism... modern Indian art by and large has been inhibited by the self-defeating purposiveness of its attempts at establishing an identity.’⁶

As Vivan Sundaram observes, ‘Group 1890 began on a radical note, but they ended in a neo-conservative Tantric mysticism.’⁷ In retrospect we can see that Group 1890 emphasised the importance of artistic practice born out of choice, rather than the accretions of cliché that went under the portmanteau term ‘Indianness’ or Indian identity. In their own boisterous manner, they were trying to retrieve alternative forms of visuality and world views from tribal and folk art; that they did not succeed is another matter.



group 1890: above left manifesto below left catalogue cover, ‘Group 1890’ exhibition, rabindra bhavan delhi 1963 right group members (top, left to right) Jeram Patel, Himmat Shah, Jyoti Bhatt, (middle) J Swaminathan, Rajesh Mehra, Raghav Kaneria, (below) Balkrishna Patel, Ambadas, Gulammohammed Sheikh, SG Nikam; (members not pictured) M Reddeppa Naidu and Eric Bowen



message from John Berger sent on the occasion of the 'First Triennale-India', rabindra bhavan delhi 1968

countries; the imperialist-backed genocide in Biafra was in its second year, and the struggle of African Americans for full civil rights in the United States had entered a decisive phase.

Vivan Sundaram, Gulammohammed Sheikh and some of their contemporaries protested against the Triennale-India in 1971, citing what they saw as two major structural flaws in this project: first, that in its concern with the international, it tended to overlook 'India's rich and complex civilisational history, and our Indian modernity with its own particular history'; and second, that it was conceived and presented by the Lalit Kala Akademi, which was 'run largely by bureaucrats at that date, [so] at the level of institutions, the protest was also to democratise the workings of the Lalit Kala Akademi'. Sundaram, who was the secretary of the All India Artists' Protest Movement, now concedes that Anand 'put the Triennale-India on a world map. So maybe he was a little ahead of us in his understanding of the need for a sophisticated internationalism'.⁸

Despite its visionary beginnings, the Triennale-India has today lapsed into a mediocre representation of world art. Its historical importance lies in

its power to stimulate an animated and self-conscious discussion among Indian artists about their position on internationalism and the role they could, or could not, play in world art. It is important to record this moment in the late 1960s, because it will clarify our analysis of the significance of internationalism today, inflected as it is with the economics of globalisation and its attendant consumerist globalism: all of which phenomena form the context of Khoj as a project, and its evolving position in the debates around globalisation. All too often in India, we sleepwalk through history, without realising the implications of what went before us, of the struggles of understanding and self-assertion enacted by previous generations.

In retrospect, the 1960s seem to have been quite productive in terms of artists' initiatives; we have not yet begun to realise the crucial importance of some of these. In 1969, for instance, the painter Akbar Padamsee founded the Vision-Exchange Workshop. This was a pioneering interdisciplinary collaboration between painters, printmakers, film-makers, a cinematographer, an animator and a psychoanalyst, funded by Padamsee's Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship. There were no curbs on artistic freedom: artists could conduct 'research' into new materials, media and contexts. Here, the painter and video artist Nalini Malani explored the grammar of film-making for the first time and the cinematographer KK Mahajan worked with the painter Gieve Patel; the film-maker Kumar Shahani interacted with the psychoanalyst Udayan Patel to make a film based on a real-life case study, while his colleague Mani Kaul embarked on a suite of drawings and made the critically acclaimed feature film *Duvidha* (1973). Padamsee himself made a few experimental films, including *Syzygy*, in collaboration with the animator Ram Mohan, and *Events in a Cloud Chamber*. In terms of actual outcomes, this workshop was not just a demonstration of artists working high-spiritedly across disciplines – which is how the term 'interdisciplinary' is misapplied in India even today. Rather, it was structured purposively around the 'boundary object' situated at the intersection of diverse domains of research.

left article by Stephen Kinzer, new york times 1998
right article on the vision exchange workshop by Akbar Padamsee, citizen and weekend review magazine 1969

THE NEW YORK TIMES, THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 1998

ARTS ABROAD

Stephen Kinzer

In India, Pioneers of Modernism Savor Their Success

CHOLAMANDAL, India — The tapping and torching sounds of a sculptor at work spilled from a shed above the Bay of Bengal on a hot afternoon, signs that one of India's most ambitious experiments in modern art is still thriving after more than three decades.

The artist hunched over his bench. Paramasivam Samanna, was one of 40 students at the Government Arts and Crafts school in Madras who resolved in the early 1960's to devote their lives to art. They pooled their meager funds to buy a cheap eight and a half acres of land south of the city, and set out to build a cooperative that would support them and their aspirations. The first group of seven artists arrived in May 1966.

"There was no road out here then, just a cow track," Mr. Samanna remembered. "We went shopping once a week with a wood cart, so we had to live off dry grains that wouldn't spoil. Cyclones would blow our houses and our work away."

Mr. Samanna now spends most of his time in Seattle, where he produces the same kind of whimsical copper, ceramic and bronze sculptures he was making here. In his visits every few years to his old base at Cholamandal, he has seen the Indian attitude toward contemporary art change.

"When we were in school, the only contemporary art we saw was in books about Picasso and Chagall at the British Council and the U. S. I. A.," he said, referring to the United States Information Agency. "As late as 1985 there were hardly one or two art books published in this country. Now there are big fat ones."

"If a newspaper covered an art opening in 1985, it was a tiny box, but now you see The Indian Express or The Hindu devoting a whole page with two or three reproductions. There is a market, and lots of rich people are buying. It's all quite new."

One reason the Cholamandal group survived to see this happy day is that its members understood from the start that they could not support themselves with fine art. Following the Bauhaus credo that art needs to embrace crafts, they began producing batik fabric printed in imaginative patterns. For years it was normal for artists here to spend two or three hours each day on batik preparation or other crafts-related work, free the rest of the time to pursue their muses.

Although the artists here still produce some batik, now they are mostly able to live comfortably from their painting and sculpture. It is widely recognized as some of the best art produced in postwar India, and is shown regularly in galleries



A sculpture on the grounds of the Cholamandal Artists' Village, India's largest self-supporting art colony, in Tamil Nadu in the south.

Today Cholamandal, named after an ancient dynasty that encouraged the arts, is India's largest self-supporting art colony and one of the most successful in Asia. Twenty-one of the original 40 artists remain. The group does not accept new members, but there are usually about half a dozen younger artists working or studying here.

An airy complex contains studios where the artists work, cottages where they live, a well-lighted gallery where they show and sell, an open-air theater and a guest house donated by the West German Government. Set in a grove of beefwood trees a few miles from the coast, it is an idyll of warm breezes and sandy paths.

Many Indian art historians say Western-style painting here began with Rajah Ravi Varma, a prince from the cultured southern state of Kerala. In the 1890's, Varma, who had studied under a Dutch art teacher, began producing realistic-looking pictures of Hindu gods and goddesses. They were reproduced on calendars that hung in many homes and inspired countless young people.

In India as elsewhere, there have been painters who have latched on to nearly every trend in the art world. But the story of 20th-century Indian

art is also the story of a series of regional schools.

The first post-Varma school, which sprang up in Bengal, was influenced by French Impressionism. Its exponents used flowing lines and diffused, misty colors to portray historical and metaphysical subjects.

At the end of the 1940's, as the Indian independence movement reached its turbulent peak, the Bengal movement fell before a new generation that rejected mystic sentimentalism as outdated and remote from the modern Indian experience. This movement, based in Bombay, admired Picasso's figurative style and embraced foreign art as a way to pull India into the modern world.

Extending or reacting to the Bombay movement, a group of art students banded together in the early 1960's in Madras, now officially called Chennai, which lies on India's eastern coast about 380 miles from the southern tip.

"You can describe their artistic ideas as metaphysical and poetic," said Josef James, an Indian art critic who has followed the Cholamandal experiment from its beginning.

"They were consumed with the challenge of finding an Indian response to the sort of art that was coming out of the West. They were influenced first by Mark Rothko, then De Kooning and later Cy Twombly, Jasper Johns and Frank Stella."

"Madras is where Abstract Expressionism was studied very closely," Mr. James said. But like Abstract Expressionism itself, the Cholamandal artists have been elbowed aside by young insurgents who complain that they have lost their love of color and have never developed an appreciation of the esoteric aspects of Indian culture. Still, Cholamandal remains one of India's artistic centers. Its members radiate a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment, as much for the growth of the art market here as for their own success.

"They are the enlightenment of contemporary art in India," said Santhana Raj, a prominent painter who recently spent several days here. "They have combined Western and Eastern influences and generated a cycle of interest in contemporary art. What has happened and is happening here is of great importance for the growth of art appreciation in this part of the world."

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THE ARTS

EXPERIMENTAL VISION

Akbar Padamsee, who has just received the Nehru Fellowship, talks here to Rama Shankardass about himself, his art and his new project for research into the visual arts.

THE PROJECT I have in mind is that of research in the visual media by a group of painters, designers, architects, photographers and film makers. We will pool our resources, including the funds from the Fellowship, and this will enable us to buy the equipment—an etching press, a lithograph press, a dark room for photography, a cine camera and a projector.

What we don't want is to form an institution because although at first it may help liberate the creative

represent various sections of society as widely as possible. The main job is carried on at the regional level, each region having a panel consisting of a fairly large number of members any four of whom form a quorum for a feature film and any one for a documentary. Hence the wide variation one notices in what is passed or not passed in one film and another. So, in a sense, we have only ourselves to thank for the state of the censorship.

But the censor code itself strives to suppress all ugly truths about society and to foster a somnolent sense of well-being. We must all pretend that we live in the best of all possible worlds; perhaps beautiful poverty may exist but ugly poverty does not; our politicians are incorruptibly honest, even our officials never, never touch a bribe; our children are all immaculately conceived with the help of God and without the dirty means of copulation; our ancient culture is what the foreign missionaries taught us in the nineteenth century, no matter what history books might say.□



Akbar Padamsee

potential, later it can have an inhibiting effect and act as a deterrent to experimentation. Therefore, we, who are anti-institution, should not set up an institution; let us not have something stale—a place for bureaucracy and red tape. We want to set up certain values and the research work that we do can, in time, become authoritative. If the idea is real and the experiment genuine, it cannot die. If it is not genuine, then it is better that it should die.

Initially we want to create the right conditions for experimentation where interaction between the various visual media can take place. This will be a premise for real experimentation.

As a scientist is concerned with problems of pure science so I, as an artist, am concerned with specific problems of art. Whereas a technologist is interested in the practical application of science, I like a mathematician, work with equations or the language of symbols. In that sense I do not have any material end in view. I am interested in processes, not in ends. Experiment is a process; painting is a process; living is a process.

Fortunately I've never had to face the problem of choice because I have always painted. When I was a child my teachers thought it strange that I drew as an adult would—a man wearing a tie and suit—and not like other children who drew a figure with a circle for a head, a big belly and arms and legs which look like sticks. Actually my teachers were quite horrified and wondered what sort of



left kasauli art centre,
indo-german workshop
1983: artists, critics
and friends
right cover, *Journal of
arts & ideas* 1993

Padamsee could not sustain the workshop because, as he puts it, the artists were not ready to pull their weight in the management of the enterprise. Never again has such an adventurous and intense workshop situation been repeated with such an intellectually vibrant constellation of cultural practitioners. However short-lived it may have been, though, the Vision-Exchange Workshop gave the Indian art world its first taste of ‘freedom towards’.

Our next halt is Kasauli, associated indelibly with Vivan Sundaram’s consistent and substantial bridge building between the field of art and the public sphere. As an artist-intellectual, activist and curator, Sundaram has curated exhibitions and seminars and organised artists into pressure

groups to fight against the bureaucratic indifference of art institutions, as well as the horrors of communalism. At the multidisciplinary workshops and seminars that he organised at Kasauli between 1976 and 1991, he helped produce a space congenial to making art as well as framing a discourse about art-making.

Sundaram set up the Kasauli Art Centre in 1976, in what had been his mother’s home, to nurture collective art activity.⁹ His experience of participating in an anarchist commune in London during the 1968 student movement surely informed his conceptualising of workshops on painting, sculpture, cinema and theatre, and of symposia around larger issues such as gender, Marxism and aesthetics.



The Kasauli Art Centre, which I regard as embodying the ‘freedom towards’ that Krishnamurti spoke of, brought a diverse grouping of interlocutors together. Their exchanges provided the discursive basis for a landmark exhibition on contemporary Indian art and, later, for a major journal. Recalls Sundaram: ‘In 1978, we began to formulate what was to become “Place for People” – curated, in 1981, by a collective that included six artists and the noted critic Geeta Kapur. We invited people from various disciplines to come and speak, so BN Goswamy came and talked about miniatures, Jyotindra Jain also came and spoke. We had the “Marxism and Aesthetics” seminar for *Social Scientist*, which was not part of the artists’ workshop but ran parallel to it. Later, these activities culminated in the establishment of the *Journal of Arts and Ideas* in 1982, with the scholar-playwright GP Deshpande as its editor. Its editorial collective included myself, Geeta Kapur, as well as people representing the visual arts, theatre, literature, architecture and film. We began to work, in these ways, on what would become a new position in Indian art – questions about the local, about various kinds of narratives, making references to different periods of art history.’¹⁰

From 1979 onwards, international art exchanges allowed artists from Europe to visit Kasauli and Indian artists to travel, in turn, to Europe. Thus, German artists such as Arwed Gorella and Siegfried Neuenhausen, who was president of the German Artists’ Union at that time, came to Kasauli. In 1982, Neuenhausen invited seven Indian artists (Nalini Malani, Sudhir Patwardhan, Nilima Sheikh, Jogen Chowdhury, Vivan Sundaram, DLN Reddy and Manu Parekh) to the Braunschweig University of Art where he taught. And in the following year, in 1983, seven German artists who taught at Braunschweig visited Kasauli.

At Neuenhausen’s suggestion, Sundaram curated an exhibition that pushed the boundaries of sculpture in terms of materials, ideology and form. ‘Seven Young Sculptors’ (1985) included most of the participants in a workshop held at Kasauli a year earlier; its catalogue essay was written by

the art critic Anita Dube, who went on to become the spokesperson of the historic Indian Radical Painters’ and Sculptors’ Association and, later, a sculptor in her own right. The chief ideologue of the Radicals was the artist Krishnakumar, one of the participants in ‘Seven Young Sculptors’. A short-lived but vibrant collective, the Radicals accentuated the importance of overcoming artistic isolation, forming linkages with revolutionary impulses in society, and developing image-making languages that were informal, tactical and communicative.¹¹

In January 1989, Delhi’s cultural sector was shocked into action by the murder of the young communist theatre activist Safdar Hashmi, who was beaten to death by political thugs while staging a street play. In response, a number of cultural practitioners of broadly leftist orientation joined together to form the Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, better known by the acronym Sahmat. Defining itself as a ‘multi-arts solidarity platform’, Sahmat called upon artists and activists to fight against the rising forces of Hindutva. Its trustees included *littérateur* Bhisham Sahni, dramatist Habib Tanvir, actor MK Raina, theatre writer GP Deshpande, Hashmi’s widow Moloyashree and brother Sohail, and Vivan Sundaram. Sahmat’s lasting contribution has been to sensitise the Indian art world to a dangerously transformed political sphere and to mobilise resistance against an oppressive cultural politics that repeatedly threatens artistic expression with censorship and violence. Sahmat’s members were inspired by the realisation that, in such a situation, the questions of art-making were inseparable from those of activism.

Sahmat found some major contributors among the participants of the Kasauli experiment, which had nearly wound up by the end of the 1980s. Sundaram himself diverted his organisational energies from Kasauli into his work as a member-trustee of Sahmat. It has been argued that some of Sahmat’s methods and approaches are flawed, and that it has not always succeeded in its goals; however, a complete mapping and critique of Sahmat lies beyond the scope of the present essay.¹²

A black and white photograph of a bronze sculpture of a standing male figure. The figure is depicted in a three-quarter view, facing slightly to the left. He has a muscular build, with prominent veins and a textured surface that suggests a weathered or aged metal. His right arm is raised, with his hand resting on his head, while his left arm is bent at the elbow, with the hand resting on his hip. The figure is standing on a flat surface, and the background is a plain, light-colored wall. The lighting is dramatic, casting strong shadows that emphasize the contours of the body.



'Young man Listening', 1985
Painted cloth, fibre glass, plaster etc., ht. approx. 4'

K.P. Krishnakumar
Alex Mathew
Asokan Poduval
N.N. Rinzon
Pushpamala N.
Prithpal Singh Sehdev Ladi
Khushbhash Shehsavat

30TH OCTOBER – 13TH NOVEMBER 1985
AT RABINDRA BHAVAN
NEW DELHI

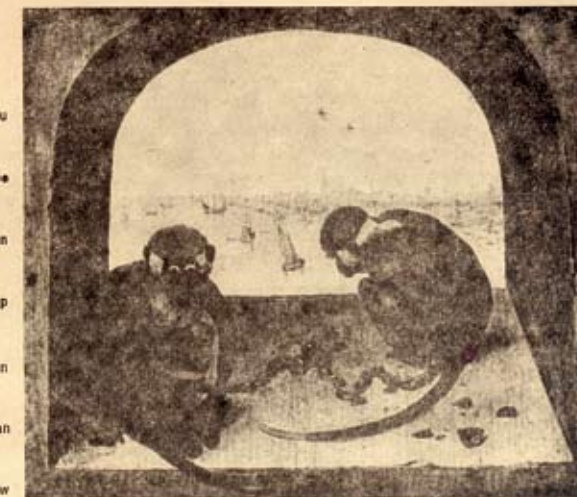
catalogue, 'Seven Young Sculptors' exhibition, rabindra bhavan delhi 1985; (left) cover with KP Krishnakumar's *The Thief* 1985; (above right) KP Krishnakumar's *Young Man Listening* 1985; (below right) participants of the 'Seven Young Sculptors' association; (left) broadsheet published on occasion of exhibition at town hall, calicut 1988; (right) poster for the 'Seven Young Sculptors' association; (below right) manifesto, published for exhibition at ms university, baroda 1987

The Birla-Coleman and Co. Ltd. proprietors of the Times of India, are celebrating 150 years of their existence in India. The way they are doing this shows clearly their desire to move with the ruling party's populist programme on Indian art and culture. They want to establish themselves as the biggest promoters of art in India and for that have recruited 35 of our well known artists to make 'timeless art'. After the Christie's auction, was the Taj Mahal and Bombay year, now the Sotheby's are here. These are the two big auction companies in the West. Through their auctions they have prepared the ground for a global Imperialist Art history. After the world wars in Europe the Art market through auctions for the American buyers produced and distributed an Art history to support capitalism. Auction houses like Sotheby's Auction anything for money, from antiques to Modern Art establishing value according to market price. Historical crisis pushes Art into crucial moments in history and produces great Art. Through auctions, the bourgeoisie capital controls and changes this history into a commodity according to its taste. This Art history backed by the capitalists is imposed on the third world and our Artists are its victims. In an Auction only big money wins and the meaning of a work of Art becomes synonymous with the millionaire's name and money status. The Indian bourgeoisie in its submission to the imperialist interest will take control and direct Indian Art History as middlemen for the imperialists. The 26th Art March, 1989 ended up on the Arabian sea to the knock of the Sotheby's auction hammer this national betrayal will be celebrated.

to the agents of Imperialism don't know that art is not the private property of the mind but the spiritual wealth of a whole country. The Indian people learnt a sad lesson after the Bhopal tragedy that we are in constant danger under the multinationals game. The artists who painted pictures of that wrote poems and were weeping in front of a completely defeated Bhopal have now joined hand in hand with the oppressors. This is a great shame and a great tragedy in the Indian art scene. For more than a century the people of this country were wrestling, with the colonial masters. The artists who deny this are criminals and enemies of the people. This vulgar action by these 35 artists betray the Indian public and now the Times of India wants to show their art in the living gallery of the V.T. railway station imagining that the people are faceless. They think that they can take over the Indian art scene by giving the greedy artists some money. People understand artists only when the art sees their life and pain. India is full of contradictions and the agony produced by the Imperialists is a known fact for the working class. These are the people continuously struggling against it. The middle class 'gentlemen' artists forget the fact that the people see truth that their eyes miss. Their political betrayal in front of thousands of people is going to alienate and isolate these 35 artists more and more from Indian history.

In India it was the Colonialist strategy to see everything as 'timeless', and now the Indian ruling classes see their country with the same eyes. The Indian farmer, the fisherman and the crowd of men and women covered with dust working to build cities don't believe in timelessness. Their each moment passes through great agony. Day and night, summer and winter writhes through time. When the people say that they don't celebrate art is what they are saying that while the burning problems of India are left unsolved a minority wants to celebrate. The populist propaganda and prop-

V. N. Jyothi Basu
Anita Dube
T. K. Harendran
C. Pradeep
C. K. Rajan
K. M. Madhusudhan
Alex Mathew



Pushkin E. H.
K. P. Krishnakumar
K. Raghunadhan
K. R. Karunakaran
Anoop B.
D. Alexander
K. Prabhakaran



reimagining a template

Until the 1980s, it was possible to identify the ideological leanings of artists, depending on who read *Scala*, who read *Span*, and who read neither. But in the 1990s, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, the reunification of Germany and the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the ideological binaries of left and right required urgent re-examination. In the early 1990s, the destruction of the Babri Masjid by the goons of Hindutva compelled artists such as Vivan Sundaram and Nalini Malani to expand their practice and explore media such as video and photography to communicate with new contexts and larger audiences. Art had to be taken out of the hallowed precincts of the gallery, which had, historically in the absence of state funding for the arts and non-commercial spaces for showcasing alternative practices, become a psychological fixation for Indian artists.

Also, in the early 1990s, India's economic liberalisation changed the look and content of print and televisual media at an accelerated pace. The technoscape was dominated by major information technology corporations, but their monopoly was gradually challenged by the new heroes of the infotech world: hackers, copyright-defying pirates, exponents of the internet. New technologies of communication and image production were being widely embraced by India's large-scale informal economy.

The time was ripe to replace the gallery object with the project and the market with the community. Artists felt the lack of an alternative space but could not find the practical means of articulating their need and establishing such a space; Khoj, although not originally meant to respond to this need, serendipitously answered it.

Liberated from the 'white cube' and its limited protocols of engagement, some artists demonstrated a marvellous flowering at the first Khoj workshop. The total freedom of making art without any ideological pressure or intra-artistic group rivalry – and, more crucially, without the anxiety of performing to a market – emancipated the artists to a considerable degree. The fact that

artists belonging to different nationalities could eavesdrop on each other's studios (however makeshift), forced them to roll up their sleeves and talk about the *work of art*, rather than boast about the gallery-ready artwork.

That Khoj has made a contribution to the careers of several artists is beyond doubt. It has also opened out their horizons, so that they can acknowledge and empathise with the struggles of other marginalised cultures.¹³ This is affirmed by Manisha Parekh, who attended a Triangle Arts workshop in Kenya in 1997, before the inaugural Khoj workshop that year: 'Kenya was a remote area with next to no facilities, but it was challenging to make work out of nothing. It was not a high-tech space, the outcome of the workshop was not spectacular, but it had a long-term effect on me. The most important thing was the interaction with other artists. I had some brushes and worked with planks of wood, paper and food grains. I used new materials for the first time; I remember I worked with beans.'¹⁴ This aesthetic of making 'something out of nothing' flows like a subterranean current through all of Parekh's work. Artists such as Parekh and Subodh Gupta consciously negotiated the politics of materials with reference to cultural specificity.

One of the early Khoj participants, Gupta is today an internationally renowned artist. At the workshop, he made a very special site-specific work – which could, in retrospect, be regarded as a turning point in his career. The circular enclosure, installed with bricks made of cow-dung, was built like a monument to his childhood memories, redolent with specific experiences of smell and touch. Cow-dung is invested with sacred properties in India, but also has everyday uses in village life, as a humble domestic fuel and an antiseptic. Gupta's monument recalls and elevates this ordinary material into the orthodox hierarchy of art. But it is also an anti-monument, which breaks the artificial barrier created by the modern gallery between an artwork and the viewer's life-world: it invites her/him to participate in a sensorium that is at once intimate and ephemeral, intensely real and yet perishable.



In the 2007 Khoj workshop held in Kashmir, Nikhil Chopra – a Kashmiri artist of Punjabi origin, now based in Mumbai – pushed the genre of performance art to its extreme. He walked ceremonially to Lal Chowk, the symbolic centre of Srinagar, synonymous with the voicing of a suppressed public will, and drew houses on the road while people walked by, stopped and gathered to watch him. Such assembly is forbidden under the emergency regulations and could have resulted in a crackdown by the armed forces. Chopra dared a political situation to reveal itself; he placed himself at risk by making drawings of a ghost town in a public space that skids between violence and curfew, the muzzle of the soldier's gun and the cry of the militant. The performance was a disruption of the very idea of 'open space' or the 'public sphere', allowing Chopra to move beyond his 'Sir Raja' performances, with their resonance of feudal ancestry and somewhat over-designed glamorous backdrops, into a more compelling practice. It is an

excellent example of what I would call performance as the art of straying and going astray – of remaking oneself by deliberately getting lost and drifting into danger.

In recent years, at its Khirkee studio, Khoj has conceived significant residencies around the relationship between art and science, performance art as well as sonic art, and a Peers residency for students to interact with each other.¹⁵ In doing so it has attempted to 'co-produce' an art world, melding the inherited template of the Triangle Arts Trust with formats that come from engagements with the changing Indian situation. **The most remarkable public art intervention made in the realm of televisual reality and community networking was that of Shaina Anand's *KhirkeeYaan*. Anand produced collaborative conversations and performances among friends and strangers residing in different neighbourhoods in Khirkee village, through an open-circuit television system deploying TV sets, cheap**

NIKHIL CHOPRA India,
Yog Raj Chitrakar Visits
Lal Chowk, Srinagar,
live performance,
Khoj kasheer 2007

CCTV equipment and several meters of cable snaking through the streets. Paradoxically, these ephemeral conversations, beamed as four views/performances on the TV screen, were marked by the stubborn and indelible fault lines of caste, class, religion and gender. This is undoubtedly the liveliest interface between technology, site and community in Indian art: Anand created a situation where the 'film' was made instantly, without the presence of a cameraman and editor; here, the participant was also witness-viewer and user. Not only did she stand the genre of classical documentary (the top-down approach to communication) on its head, but she also pierced a hole through the specious claims of the televisual media, which are believed to dole out democracy cheaply through SMS polls and hard-talking TV shows.

the idea of asia

It is important to note that Khoj was the Triangle Arts Trust's first workshop in Asia. A drastically summarised political history would help us understand the reasons behind the burgeoning interest of the West in Asia, and why Asia became more of a reality to Asia itself from the 1980s onwards.

Until the early 1980s, Asia was primarily a geo-political construct based on the diplomatic, military and commercial interests of the contending superpowers and their allies in the region. The Cold War discourses, however, began to recede through the 1980s and were displaced, by the mid-1990s almost entirely, by other themes: the self-confidence of the ASEAN (the Association of South-east Asian Nations) grouping; the gradual conviction, among the Japanese ruling elite, that Japan must fashion its own attitudes and policies vis-à-vis Asia, independently of US concerns; the emergence of Singapore as a strong, self-consciously regional player and a hub; the rise of Korea as a commercial power, and its self-perception as an isolated peninsula in need of stronger linkages with the world; the realisation, in Australia, that a rapprochement with Asian realities would be

both wiser and more profitable than the unrealistic role of a Western satellite in the region. Most important, perhaps, was the carefully calibrated transition of China from a state-controlled, traditionally communist economy to a state-guided free-market system, and a looming economic and military presence.

During the same period, from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, the attention of Cold War strategists in the US shifted to Afghanistan, Germany and Eastern Europe; with the end of the Cold War, US interests began to focus on West Asia and the oil heartland. Correspondingly, Japan, Australia, Singapore and the ASEAN countries found themselves in a situation of having to think for themselves – to frame their foreign policy in a regional frame, and to emphasise soft power, since they could not be military leaders. China also began to minimise the motif of military might – except towards Taiwan, which it claims as a breakaway but integral part of itself – and play up the motif of trade and cultural relations. Through all these sweeping changes, India vacillated between diplomacy and rashness; despite its leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement and its role in creating SAARC (the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation), it remained relatively isolated, aloof from other Asian coalitions such as ASEAN, seemingly not fully conversant with the global transformation.

In the post-Cold War phase, geo-political realities have been redrafted and various Asian countries have emerged as actual or potential powerhouses for the global economy. Importantly, Asia has become more of a reality to Asia – whether at summit-level governmental meetings, trade conferences, media gatherings or art biennales, it has rapidly become clear that there are threads of opportunity that bind Mumbai and Shanghai, Kuala Lumpur and Beijing, Tokyo and Manila, New Delhi and Jakarta. It is through such moments of encounter and discussion that a new sense of Asia has begun to emerge. While it is true that this new Asia might have come to birth in the minds of strategic planners and market consultants, it has certainly

opened up conceptual and operational space for cultural synergy. And this is crucial in an age when artists are able to travel more frequently, compare notes more quickly over the internet and collaborate more freely across the barriers of nation and region.¹⁶

As for India, it paid dearly for turning its back on Asia. For many of India's cultural actors, with some notable exceptions such as Tagore and Coomaraswamy, the idea of the international has meant a fixation on the West, particularly West Europe and North America. Similarly, for many Indian artists, international art is virtually synonymous with Euro-American art, or with taste legislated from Euro-American centres such as New York and London. According to some observers, Asia became a point of conversation in the Indian art world only in 1993, with the inaugural show of the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art. APT produced a new regionality within which to map art practices in the Asian context. By the time Khoj was born in 1997, the Gwangju Biennale had already been inaugurated (1996) and the landmark show 'Traditions/Tensions: Contemporary Art in Asia', curated by Apinan Poshyananda, had been held at the Asia Society in New York (also 1996). In the same year as Khoj, the path-breaking travelling exhibition 'Cities on the Move' began its journey across the planet; curated by Hou Hanru and Hans Ulrich Obrist, it contextualised urbanism and architecture in relation to Asia's rapidly growing metropolitan centres.

Indian artists such as Nalini Malani took part in the second APT and Sheela Gowda, Bhupen Khakhar, Ravinder Reddy, NN Rimzon and Arpita Singh as well as Malani participated in 'Traditions/Tensions'. But it would be some time before Indian artists could form connections with Asian artists, especially their immediate neighbours, with whom they shared an uneasy political relationship. To remedy this situation, Sood, even as she was involved with the organisation of Khoj's first workshop, curated a series of exhibitions titled 'Mappings: Shared Histories... a Fragile Self' to commemorate 50 years of independence for India and Pakistan.¹⁷ A year

after 'Mappings', India conducted nuclear tests in Pokhran, and in 1999, Pakistan's incursion into Kargil worsened the already strained ties between the two countries. In the same year, Shilpa Gupta met Huma Mulji at Khoj Delhi. Together, they organised 'Aar-Paar' ('Back and Forth'), a public art project with artists from Mumbai and Karachi. Even when political blockades prevented artists from travelling between the two countries, their works crossed the borders of contention.

With the political situation between India and Pakistan at its nadir, Khoj organised 'Manoeuvring Miniatures', a show of Pakistani artists curated by Virginia Whiles, in Delhi and Mumbai (2001). Artists from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal have been invited to Khoj at politically turbulent moments, whether it was the Royal Palace massacre in Nepal, the failed Indo-Pak summits, or the attack on the Indian Parliament.

As against this, Sood laments the paltry exchange of art at an official level between India and other Asian countries. She quotes the critic Gayatri Sinha who put forward the following statistics of outgoing and incoming Indian art exhibitions to and from Asia at a Khoj seminar, 'Chaos or Congruence: contemporary art practice in South Asia/Asia', held in Delhi in 2001. Sinha noted: 'Of all the exhibitions sent abroad by the National Gallery of Modern Art [the nodal agency that mediates visual art exchange in India] from 1995 to 2001, one went to Dhaka for the Festival of India in Bangladesh and one went to Beijing. Three more to other Asian countries. If we consider the incoming exhibitions from 1989, of the 76 incoming exhibitions, again only one each from Bangladesh and China, and five from Korea and Japan – again fuelled by the active interest of the Japan Foundation. So in a 12-year period, art received at the official level from Asian countries is less than 10 per cent!¹⁸

By contrast with this bureaucratic apathy, Khoj facilitated the initiation of workshops in the Asian region: Vasl in Pakistan and Theertha in Sri Lanka, both in 2001, and Britto in Bangladesh and Sutra in Nepal, in 2003.

Thus, Khoj has proved that a lateral internationalism, which connects us horizontally with countries in Asia, is both possible and sustainable – as against some of the older, top-down and West-centric models of internationalism that continue to dominate the imagination of many Indian cultural practitioners.

the fruits of disruption

Organisations are like organisms: they have a life cycle, they must periodically replenish and rejuvenate themselves. One of Khoj's objectives is to 'synergise' practices belonging to different regions. But perhaps the operative term, after a decade of activities, could be 'self-disruption'. When Khoj began in the late 1990s, it disrupted the artists' chronic gallery reflexes by pushing them out of the white cube. How will Khoj account for the changing logic of art-making in India today, the 'post-historical condition' (to borrow Danto's term) and the amplitude of artistic choices that such a liberating situation makes possible? How will it attend to the relationship of alternative practices (and their practitioners) to the institutionalised mainstream of the Indian art world? Especially when galleries are endorsing ephemeral art (in whatever limited capacity) and auction houses have begun to sell photographs that record moments from performance pieces. What, indeed, is the Khojness of Khoj?

If we do not want Khoj to be reduced merely to an institution with the best calendar of events or the most efficient cultural network in the Asian region, the heavy traffic on its itinerary must be interrupted, interjected with dialogue and discourse. I would suggest that, perhaps, Khoj must disrupt its own self-perpetuating logic to gain a renewed measure of effectiveness. And perhaps it must examine new fields of renovation. One of the major systemic flaws of the Indian art world – the mediocre quality of art criticism and the banality and laziness of much art-historical activity – cannot be wished away by pitching spectacle against spectacle, bafflement against novelty.

In my own experience as critic-in-residence at Khoj Mumbai, I realised that the critic's role was – either by unquestioned custom or the dogma of the 'artist-run occasion' – restricted to the facilitation of artists' presentations. I close this essay on an autobiographical note: with the proposal that, if ours is to be a healthy art world, expressive activity must proceed in dialogue with discursive activity, and not with antagonism towards it. For this reason, Khoj will soon have to produce a discourse of encounter, participation, insertion and engagement. It must therefore also recognise that the work of the critic is a related but independent project of research and inquiry; that the critic is the artist's fellow contributor and collaborator in the production of culture.

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1 The first Khoj working group comprised Ajay Desai, Anita Dube, Bharti Kher, Prithpal Singh Ladi, Manisha Parekh, Subodh Gupta, and Pooja Sood, who was then the director of the Eicher Gallery, Delhi. The workshop took place in Modinagar, an industrial township east of Delhi. In the course of a fortnight, 22 artists from countries as diverse as Namibia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Cuba and Australia, as well as artists from all over India, worked together. Ajay Desai, the co-ordinator of the workshop, writes in the Khoj 1997 catalogue on the importance of such initiatives: '... so that instead of remaining isolated from the world, we contribute positively towards a common yet heterogeneous cultured future based on co-operation, exchange and an appreciation of all that is unique to each society'.

2 Triangle Arts Trust brought artists out of their studio-enforced isolation and provided the space to share ideas and art practices in an intense two-week workshop. It earned the name 'Triangle' because Caro invited ten artists each from Britain, Canada, and America. The workshop was supposed to be a one-time event, but it was so successful that Caro continued to run the workshop for a decade. In 1985, another workshop was facilitated by Triangle Arts Trust in Thupelo, Johannesburg, on the initiative of South African artists. The workshops brought together artists from different parts of the African region during the turbulent apartheid years. The specific history of Khoj must be seen against the backdrop of Triangle interventions across the globe. In 1995, the Triangle Arts Trust invited Indian artists to its workshops in Zambia, the UK, Namibia, South Africa, New York and so forth. Some of these artists were inspired enough, after their trips, to form a working group under Robert Loder's guidance and organise the first Khoj workshop. Over a 25-year period, the Triangle model has been replicated in other places, from Cape Town, South Africa, through Kunming, China, to a fishing village in Martinique.

3 Pooja Sood in telephonic conversation with the author (November 2007). Sood recalls how she attended an arts management workshop in Salzburg in 1999 where she presented the activities of Khoj. She remembers being impressed by the emphasis put during discussions there on the importance of networking, confidence-building measures and finding the right people to collaborate with.

4 See Krishnamurti, J. *You Are The World* (Harper & Row, New York, 1972).

5 See Adajania, Nancy. 'From One Crisis to the Next: The Fate of Political Art in India' in Monica Narula *et al* (eds), *Sarai Reader 4: Crisis/Media* (Sarai/CSDS, New Delhi, 2004).

6 See the 'Group 1890 Manifesto' in *Lalit Kala Contemporary 40: Special Issue on J Swaminathan* (Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, March 1995).

7 Vivan Sundaram in telephonic conversation and email exchange with the writer (November 2007).

8 These remarks were made by Vivan Sundaram, in telephonic conversation with the writer (November 2007). I am indebted to Sundaram for this account of the Triennale-India and the resistance mounted by artists against it. For a documentation of the artists' criticisms (especially those of Sundaram, Swaminathan and the critic Kapur) against the Second Triennale-India, see 'An Artist's Protest' in *The Times of India*, Delhi, 31 January 1971 in *Lalit Kala Contemporary* – 36, September 1990.

9 The first Kasauli art workshop hosted Gieve Patel, Arpita and Paramjit Singh, Manu and Madhvi Parekh, Nalini Malani and Srilekha Sikander. Later, Gulammohammed Sheikh, Bhupen Khakhar, Sudhir Patwardhan, A Ramachandran, Nagji Patel, Mrinalini Mukherjee, Prithpal Singh Ladi, NN Rimzon, Valsan Kolleri and many others visited Kasauli. Before Kasauli, the Kashmiri artist GR Santosh (who had studied under NS Bendre in Baroda and had become a leading exponent of the neo-Tantric style) was the only artist to organise annual art camps, every summer in Kashmir.

10 Vivan Sundaram in telephonic conversation and email exchange with the writer (November 2007).

11 One of the significant outcomes of the debates that took place in the Indian Radical Painters' and Sculptors' Association was the exhibition 'Questions and Dialogue' (1987). In the catalogue essay, Anita Dube observes that the Radicals wanted to move towards 'a philosophy of praxis other than that of an isolated artistic search ... [and] avoid the inevitable petrification (sic) of life and art under capitalist competition and the exercise of individual ambitions'.

12 For a critique of Sahmat, see Dutta, Arindam. 'SAHMAT, 1989-2004: Liberal Art Practice Against the Liberalised Public Sphere' in *Cultural Dynamics* Vol 17 No 2 (Sage, London, Thousand Oaks CA, and New Delhi, 2005).

13 Dube, Anita. 'Khoj: The Search Within', exhibition catalogue (Khoj International Artists' Workshop, New Delhi, 1997). Dube, who wrote the catalogue essay for the first Khoj workshop, especially singles out the 'African will to art' displayed in the works of David Koloane, Omega Ludenyi and Yoba Jonathan, who used poor materials such as old gunny bags, used tea bags and discarded window and door frames.

'They could pick up junk fragments and weld them together, then paint them towards a non-formalist narrative.'

14 Manisha Parekh in telephonic conversation with the writer (November 2007).

15 While Khoj was 'in transit', it organised five annual workshops in Modinagar from 1997-2001, then moved to Mysore in 2002, Bangalore in 2003, Bombay in 2005, Calcutta in 2006 and to Kashmir in 2007. Khoj 'at anchor', so to speak, came about in 2002, with the establishment of Khoj Studios at Khirkee, Delhi, comprising six studios, an office and a gallery.

16 See Adajania, Nancy. 'Shifting Routes, Floating Continents' in Wonil Rhee (ed), *The Thermocline of Art* (ZKM, Karlsruhe, 2007).

17 See Sood, Pooja (ed). *Mappings: Shared Histories... A Fragile Self* (Eicher Gallery, New Delhi, 1998).

18 See Sood, Pooja. 'Towards Building a South Asian Network for the Arts' in *Mapping ArtSouthAsia: a visual and cultural dialogue between Britain and South Asia* (Shisha, Manchester, 2006).