SUMMER FELLOWSHIP PROJECTS

SOUND PROJECTS

Project 1: Musical Instruments of India

The archives and library of the ARCE has extensive resources on musical instruments from various parts of India, representing a range of genres, playing techniques and communities who play them. These range from those that belong to the classical music traditions of North and South India as well as those which belong to various regional musical traditions.

The collections made by various scholars as well as by ARCE contain audio and video recordings. ARCE has the beginnings of a database of musical instruments that includes classification, terminology and nomenclature, materials used, method of playing, context of performance, communities and related genres. Digital images have also been created for incorporation into the database. A part of the project would be to complete this database to the extent possible by editing existing entries and adding new ones.

An exhibit of selected instruments would be then curated and created on the Virtual Museum of Image and Sound under the Music in Context section, in essence creating a gallery of Musical Instruments. The classification system would be used to demonstrate connections and variations of similar instruments across India.

Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds-Divisions (vmis.in).
https://vmis.in/arcecategories/music_in_context.

The project offers and opportunity of learning about various musical traditions, basic principles of organology, and learning to work on archival databases as well as the back end of an existing virtual museum.

Methodology

- Survey ARCE collections of recordings to identify musical instruments.
- Review existing database.
- Add entries based on descriptions created using the ARCE library.
- Identify recordings, create sample recordings, locate images and make a selection.
- Design the gallery of musical instruments using a classification system, to showcase the heritage of musical instruments of India.

Deliverables:

Completed database entries on the musical instrument database.
Gallery of Musical Instruments on Virtual Museum of Image and Sound.

Project Supervisor
Shubha Chaudhuri Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, AIIS
Project 2: Sufi Musical Traditions

Music is an important part of Sufi traditions of South Asia, and includes myriad musical traditions. These range from the ballads from Sindh and Punjab, Rajasthan, as well as many musical traditions in Kutch, Gujarat, such as Shah jo Rag and Dastan, going on to Qawwali, Zikr and others in parts of North India. It is a repertoire of musicians in some cases, and part of devotional practice in others. ARCE has collections of the Sufi ballads, based on love stories from Sindh, Kutch, Rajasthan and Punjab, extensive collections of Qawwali and related genres from North India and Assam. The recording collections are supported by publications in the ARCE Library.

A gallery which showcases selected Sufi musical traditions from the archives can be then curated and created on the Virtual Museum of Image and Sound under the Music in Context section, to demonstrate the range of Sufi Musical Traditions in India.

Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds-Divisions (vmis.in).
https://vmis.in/arcecategories/music_in_context.

Methodology

- Review ARCE collections to identify recordings of Sufi musical traditions
- Create descriptions using documentation and library resources.
- Edit audio and video samples, digitise images if required.
- Curating and creating the exhibit will include selection of the traditions to be presented,
- Design the scheme of the exhibitions through sections and subsections as desired using the highly dynamic and flexible back end of the Music in Context section of the Virtual Museum of Music and Sound. Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds-Divisions (vmis.in).
  https://vmis.in/arcecategories/music_in_context.

Deliverables

- Contributing to the metadata of the recordings in the ARCE archive system.

Project Supervisor
Shubha Chaudhuri Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, AIIS
Project 3: “Songs of the Madmen”: Bauls of Bengal

Bauls of Bengal are traditionally wandering minstrels who sing of spiritual themes and constitute a syncretic religious as well as musical sect. Today the term Baul and Fakir are both used. The musical tradition has gone beyond being the expression of a spiritual practice of Bauls who wandered through the villages of Bengal supported by the community to successful musicians on the Indian and international stage.

The ARCE archive has an extensive collection of video recordings of the Bauls of Bengal deposited by Sally Grossman on behalf of the Baul Archive. This collection has recordings representing approximately 100 Bauls. The recordings include performances and interviews, some arranged, and many recorded at the fairs or melas where Bauls routinely perform. The collection is fully digitized and catalogued, and includes a large number of translations that accompany the recordings.

The aim of this project involves working with the collections, primarily that of the Baul Archive collection, and creating an online introductory exhibition on the Google Arts and Culture website. This would mean curating the exhibition such that it introduces the Bauls and their music, represents the collections and creates links for further exhibitions. The AIIS has a partnership with Google Arts and Culture to be able to create online exhibitions using their backend tools and with support from the staff of Google Arts and Culture. The ARCE archive also has historic recordings Baul performances from the 1930s, made by the Dutch ethnomusicologist Arnold Bake that could also be used in conjunction with the Baul Archive Collection of videos. This project would yield the first of a set of future exhibitions on the Bauls – one on the fairs or melas, the family of Nabani Das Baul, and so forth. Thus this project provides not only the opportunity of working with important collections of recordings on Bauls and Fakirs but of learning to work in an archives as well as learning the digital tools and the experience of mounting an exhibition on the Google Arts and Culture platform.

Knowledge or familiarity with Bangla would be an asset.

Methodology
The first step is to do some background reading on Bauls, after which the existing collections can be reviewed, and materials selected. Though the collection is catalogued it is anticipated that work will have to be done to improve the organisation of materials, collate translations and so forth. ARCE has other collections of recordings of Bauls which can be referred to as part of the background study. The staff of Google Arts and Culture will be available to provide guidance and introduce the digital tools that are available. The staff of the Baul Archives team will also be available to consult. Part of the project also would entail adding and supplementing existing metadata to archival records to the extent possible.

Deliverables
An exhibition on the Bauls of Bengal (title to be chosen) on the Google Arts and Culture website.

Project Supervisor
Shubha Chaudhuri Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, AIIS
Project 4: The Performing Arts Ephemera Collection of Sunil Kothari

This project is different as it is based on documents rather than recordings. This collection of over 6000 documents has been filed in 69 categories. The ephemera range from posters to flyers, brochures, reports, pamphlets of a range of performing arts from all over India and abroad. The project would involve creation of an exhibition with images scanned from the documents, in the form of a digital photo essay which discusses:

1. The importance of ephemera as archival resource
2. A curated introduction to this particular collection.

The documents from this collection, the ARCE library and publications can all be referred to for a better understanding. The final product can be on a platform such as WordPress and be hosted online by the AIIS.

Methodology
Review the collection of ephemera and create an outline of the contents. Design the outline of the introductory exhibition and create descriptions accordingly. Scan selected images with assistance from ARCE staff.

Deliverables:

- Assist in improvement and refinement of the categories and files.
- An exhibition on the Performing Arts Ephemera Collection of Sunil Kothari. (Title to be given)

Project Supervisor
Shubha Chaudhuri Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, AIIS
VISUAL ARTS PROJECTS

Project 1: From Structures to Textiles: Shared Motifs in Indian Art

The diverse array of Indian textile motifs often finds its roots and synchronous representation in Indian art and architecture. Various fabric styles, including the use of bandhani (tie & dye), are evident in the sixth-century paintings found within the Ajanta caves. The patterns on the walls of the eleventh-century Queen’s Step Well in Patan reference motifs used in hand-woven Patan Patola sarees, an art involving double ikat weaving, to the Solanki era of Gujarat. Inspired by the impressive pre-medieval religious architecture of the Pallava, Pandya, and Chola rulers of Tamil Nadu, the temple borders of Kanchipuram sarees mirror the upward progression of temple gopurams in a linear fashion. Saree borders across India, including Baluchari from Bengal, Banarasi from Uttar Pradesh, Sambalpuri from Odisha, Paithani from Maharashtra, and Kalamkari from Andhra Pradesh feature pillars, columns, lamp niches, rudraksha beads, kalash (a pitcher), and animal figures found on temple walls, such as elephants, horses, lions, birds, and peacocks, yalis (composite animal figures), Makara (crocodile). The ikat checked style observed at the sixteenth-century Virabhadraswamy temple in Lepakshi, Andhra Pradesh, bears similarity with the checked patterns in saris that have gained popularity in the Deccan belt. Similarly, Mughal structures, such as the Taj Mahal and Itimad ud Daulah’s tomb, and contemporaneous textiles, including Kashmir shawls, carpets, embroidered and block printed apparel, and tents as kannats or panels, feature similar floral motifs like poppy, marigold, and narcissus.

CA&A’s wide-ranging documentation of architecture and art objects from the Indian subcontinent includes abundant specimens of the textile traditions including the ones mentioned above. Through this project, the Center seeks to explore the shared aspirations of the artist communities of pre-modern India which encouraged the creation of synergetic motifs parallely used in art forms, such as textiles and architecture. The project’s goal is to develop a digital presentation drawing upon the Center’s offline and online collection of photographs and publications. The presentation will spotlight a textile tradition from a specific region/s of India to illustrate the artistic synergies unique to the structural and textile conventions of that region.

METHODOLOGY
In the initial phase, the Fellow will select a region to work on and develop a concept note in consultation with the project mentor. The Fellow will collect information including images and published materials from online and offline archives and the CA&A library. The Fellow will create a checklist of images and relevant information for their online presentation. In the second phase, the presentation will be designed on WordPress and launched at the Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds (VMIS).

DELIVERABLE
The Fellow will create a digital presentation/exhibition for the VMIS website. The Fellow will also share research information and a bibliography developed on the project with the Center to enhance the existing CA&A metadata and other online resources relating to the collection selected for this presentation.

PROJECT SUPERVISOR
Vandana Sinha, Director, Center for Art and Archaeology, AIIS
Project 2: Brick as Building Material in Ancient India

The earliest evidence of the use of brick as a building material dates to as early as 9000 BCE. The bricks were made of clay components and sometimes used straw as a binder. Later technological advancements enabled the production of baked bricks fired in kilns. The ancient settlements in Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, and China demonstrate wide use of baked bricks. In the Indian subcontinent, the earliest evidence of the use of bricks, which are sun-dried mud bricks, was found at the site of Mehrangarh, in present-day Baluchistan in Pakistan, dated around 7000 BCE. Similar bricks were used in settlements such as Amri and other early sites in the Indus Valley region. By the mature phase of the Indus Valley civilization, the usage of fired brick became prominent in addition to sun-dried bricks. The use of fired bricks is also evident in large city-states (Mahajanapadas) in ancient India. From the third and first century BCE, the Mauryan-Shunga empires preferred fire-baked brick as a construction material for significant buildings such as monasteries, temples, commemorative structures, and palaces. The chief sites of the Gupta dynasty, such as Pawaya in Madhya Pradesh, Ahichchhitra, and Bhittargaon in Uttar Pradesh have some remarkable brick monuments decorated with terracotta sculptures built under the patronage of Gupta rulers. The ancient Mahakosala region, the present-day states of Chhattisgarh and parts of Madhya Pradesh, demonstrates plenty of brick architectural construction of temples and monasteries, built between the 6th and 12th centuries CE. In the eastern regions of India and Bangladesh, Pala and Sen patrons also used bricks extensively for building temples, monasteries, and shrines around the 8th century onwards. Among the notable examples are the Nalanda University, the Mahabodhi temple in Gaya, the Vikramshila Vihara in Bihar, and the Shormpur Vihara in Bangladesh. The Qutb Minar, probably the world's tallest brick minaret, was constructed in the 10th century during the Sultanate period. The terracotta temples of Bengal originated in the 16th century CE under the influence of the Vaishnava movement, especially the Radha-Krishna cult, which lasted almost till the 19th century CE.

This project aims to create an online digital resource on the brick architecture traditions of the Indian subcontinent. The Center’s visual archive of over 7000 monuments and about 10,000 architectural drawings includes meticulous documentation of brick architecture from all over India. Given the short duration of the fellowship, the Fellow can use the archives to review examples from a specific geographical region of the Indian subcontinent from perspectives, such as:

- Did rural or urban areas, or certain types of structures, favour brick more than stone?
- How did brickmaking and brick-using evolve across varied dominions and cultures in India?
- Was there any cultural significance of brick as a material for construction in the Indian subcontinent.
- How did various cultural inflows influence the history of brick in India?

**METHODOLOGY**

During the initial phase of the fellowship, the Fellow will get acquainted with the CA&A’s collection of brick architecture and develop a database of brick structure varieties across the regions and in all different periods. This research will allow the Fellow to create a basic categorisation of brick structures that differentiate between structural brickwork often covered over with plaster coating, and decorative brickwork, such as the temples in Bengal. The Fellow will use the CA&A archive, library, and online resources to develop a curatorial note for the exhibition and a checklist of the
items from the collection that will be part of this virtual resource. In the second phase, the virtual resource/album will be curated on WordPress.

**DELIVERABLES**

The Fellow will curate a digital resource or an exhibition on a content-sharing platform, such as WordPress. The Fellow will also enhance the existing CA&A metadata for the collection selected for this resource.

**PROJECT SUPERVISOR**

Vandana Sinha, Director, Center for Art and Archaeology, AIIS
Project 3: Games and Sports in Indian Arts

Games and sports are an expression of Indian culture and have long been used for entertainment as well as didactic purposes. Mentions of board games go back to the Vedic period. A game of *pachisi* (*pachesii*) lies at the heart of the epic Mahabharata. Not surprisingly, depictions of games and athletic endeavours in paintings, sculpture, and architecture are quite common.

The CA&A photo archive has a diverse collection of images that show games and sports. India can lay claim to the origin of many popular board games that were both recreational and instructive and often used religious imagery as decoration. For instance, the photo archives have recorded *ganjifa* cards, a card game associated with Persia, created in Odisha, and ornamented with *pattachitra* illustrations of *dashavatara*. Miniature paintings depicted on the themes of Kalpasutra, Ragamala, and Krishna-Leela show scenes of kite flying, *gyan chaupar* (modern snakes and ladders), gymnastic bouts, and acrobatics.

In architecture as well, we see illustrations of combat sports such as cock fights on the facades of churches and temples. The theme of Parvati and Shiva playing dice is an important one in Western Indian sculpture and occurs frequently at Ellora (8th century). The backgammon board with all the pieces arranged is visibly placed between Shiva and Parvati at the cave site. In another example, a Gandhara panel shows wrestling in Early India (1st-2nd century CE).

The fellow is encouraged to draw from the various examples in CA&A’s photo archives and interpret them from a unique perspective such as the transformation of games in modern times, and cultural and artistic aspects of games and games used as metaphors for abstract concepts.

The objective of this project is to shed light on a select image collection drawn from the CA&A Photo-archives which depicts ancient sports and games prevalent in India and to share this resource online for the information of public and academic audiences. In addition, the material produced through this project will be used to enrich the information relating to the relevant holdings.

**METHODOLOGY**

During the initial phase of the fellowship, the Fellow will get familiarized with the CA&A’s archival collection on games and sports and similar collections digitized and available online. The Fellow will develop a concept note for the exhibition using the CA&A archive and library; and prepare a checklist of the materials from the collection that will be included in the virtual exhibition. In the second phase, the exhibition will be designed on WordPress and launched at the Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds (VMIS).

**DELIVERABLE**

The Fellow will curate a digital exhibition for the VMIS website. The Fellow will also share research information collected on the project with the Center to enhance the existing CA&A metadata relating to the collection selected for this exhibition.

**PROJECT SUPERVISOR**

Vandana Sinha, Director, Center for Art and Archaeology, AIIS
**Project 4: Documentation and Cataloging of Frederick M. Asher’s Image Archives on Buddhist Sites**

The late Professor Frederick M. Asher, former AIIS President and a leading art historian who taught Indian art history at the University of Minnesota, donated his collection of 25000 digital images to the CA&A in 2017. The coverage of F. M. Asher's image collections reflects his wide interest in the arts and architecture of South Asia. The Center is documenting F. M. Asher's image collection to make those materials available online for open access. In this endeavour, CA&A has launched images of three major Buddhist sites, Bodh Gaya (Bihar) and Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh) in 2022 and a digital exhibition on the ancient university of Nalanda (Bihar) on the website of Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds at www.vmis.in.

The current project aims to develop documentation of four other major sites related to Buddha’s life from F. M. Asher’s photo collection - Kushinagar, Vaishali, Rajgir, and Sravasti. Rick’s image collection of these sites is unique from the viewpoint of his documentation approach which gives preference to expansive views of the surroundings as much as to the main subject. Proper documentation of his material will enrich the existing visual materials on Buddhist sites in the CA&A photo archive and help create a substantive resource. It will also add new materials to the archive on sites such as Kushinagar and Sravasti which are not documented by CA&A.

The fellow who works on this project would be expected to refer to and evaluate various primary and secondary academic sources to identify images and record basic information in a template. During the documentation process, the Fellow will critically analyze and interpret the production and use of art and architecture at these sites of great historical importance. This data organized from scholarly research will be published on VMIS which will further allow scholars in the field to uncover more information. The new material will also complement Asher’s publications on the subject that contain select images from these sites.

**METHODOLOGY**

The Fellow will browse through the collection, identify, and group the images as per the architectural segments they belong to, and conduct research to gather contextual information about them. The Center’s library and photo collection on the sites will be referred to to gather relevant supporting materials for the documentation. The Fellow will write captions for each holding regarding the image subject, patron, architectural style, construction material, and date of the monument or artefact and prepare bibliographic references. Data entry of each record will be done as per the template provided by the Center in an Excel format. The Center's research and technical staff will help the Fellow prepare the images for online display through VMIS.

**DELIVERABLE**

The Fellow will prepare an image catalogue of F. M. Asher’s images of Kushinagar, Vaishali, Raigir, and Sravasti which will be published on AIIS's website VMIS. The Fellow will also write an introduction to the sites documented and create a bibliography. The project calls for strong art historical research and data organization skills and working proficiency with Microsoft Excel.

**PROJECT SUPERVISOR**

Vandana Sinha, Director, Center for Art and Archaeology, AIIS
Project 5: Animating the Grand Trunk Road: Creation of an Interactive Web Page

The Grand Trunk Road, one of the oldest and most significant of such pre-modern roads, variously known as Uttarapath, Sadak-i-Sher Shah, Badshahi Sadak, stretched across North India and was used for over two millennia as the main east-west artery cutting across the sprawling domain. Over a decade ago, the Center for Art and Archaeology conducted a documentation survey of a portion of the Grand Trunk Road, a sixteenth-century highway, that once connected Agra (India) and Lahore (Pakistan), two of the most important cities and power centers pre-partition. The project documented the historic architecture, that survives along with the highway in Haryana and Punjab, including colossal rest-houses (caravanserai), distance markers (kos minar), step wells (baoli), bridges and gardens carefully laid along the Agra-Lahore highway to facilitate large caravans. After the partition of India and Pakistan, this travel route also disconnected and diverted, and several surviving structures took on new functions. For instance, the rest houses at Taravadi, Faridabad, Gharunda, Sahabad and Pukhta in Haryana, and Rajnagar, Fatehabad, Sultanpur Lodi and Amanat Khan, built to shelter large caravans have been repurposed for dwellings. Many monuments built along this highway are outstanding examples of contemporary engineering, masonry and artistic skills and are often perilously close to being destroyed. Vagaries of time and socio-political upheavals have affected the conditions of many historic buildings.

With this material, the Center aims to create a digital web platform that allows scholars and non-experts to interact with the built environment of this highway and learn about the facts and fables associated with this travel route in the past and present. This digital platform is also intended to be a centralized repository of materials related to the project including images, audio-visual films, metadata, recordings, textual materials, bibliography, weblinks etc.

**METHODOLOGY**

The Fellow will browse through the collection, identify, and group the materials as per the genre they belong to, and conduct research to gather contextual information about them. The Center’s library and the online ([www.vmis.in](http://www.vmis.in)) photo, drawing and audio-visual database on the sites will be referred to gather relevant supporting materials for the documentation. The Fellow will create a concept note and construct an interactive web platform based on that which allows the users to trace the highway and interact with the materials associated with the sites.

**DELIVERABLE**

The Fellow will prepare a web page in WordPress which will be published on AIIS’s website VMIS.

**PROJECT SUPERVISOR**

Vandana Sinha, Director, Center for Art and Archaeology, AIIS