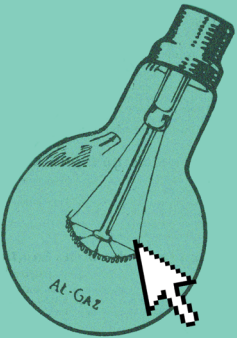


20 GENDER BENDER 20





We would like to start by stating the obvious-this year has been like no other. We have always talked of how art 'brings us together', and how 'we celebrate' by coming together-2020 has been anything but that. In the face of untold human tragedy, the one thing we have not been able to do is assemble together, but come together we did, in ways we could not have imagined a year ago.

Even as news of cancellations of festivals from across the world started pouring in, we were determined to keep the spirit of the festival going in some form, and in this we were joined, as always, by our partners at Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore. Our open call received nearly 200 applications, and it was this overwhelming response along with the quality, passion and conviction in the applications that made us take a unanimous decision (with the Jury members) that this year, instead of 10, we would award 15 grants.

What is clearer than ever is that art is at the crux of bringing positive change and increased empathy in our lives. Now more than ever, we need the transformative power of art, because 2020 and everything it has brought with it is unprecedented. We hope that it will make the work created under these extraordinary circumstances all the more special.

Gender Bender 2020 is not an online festival, our grantees will create the physical works in their own time when better conditions prevail, what will be on display is the effort and the work-in-progress version of their creations.

We are honoured to have as our partners the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore on this edition of Gender Bender, as with the previous five. Also, Gender Bender would not be what it is without the help, support and encouragement of the jury, grantees, our designers Kritika Trehan and Stawdio, documentation team Falana Films, friends and supporters from the extended arts community.

TEAM AT SANDBOX COLLECTIVE

BANGALORE

DEAR FRIENDS,

We are proud and honoured to present the sixth edition of **Gender Bender!** In the first four years, the Festival took place at our institute, last year it grew in scope and size and moved to Bangalore International Centre (BIC) in Domlur. By then, if not before, it had become a highly professional, full-fledged festival, centred around questions of gender, equality, sexuality and identity. In 2020, everything will be different.

Our society has been almost exclusively focused on the corona pandemic and we have all gone through varying degrees of hardship. Many have lost loved ones to the disease, our lives have changed drastically. Despite this situation, the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan has committed to cooperating with our valued cultural partner Sandbox Collective and the 2020 grantees/artists on an exciting new format for Gender Bender. Gender Bender goes online, at least for the moment, and the presentation will be different and innovative. We have been forced to develop new approaches and ways of working together, discussing, looking at art and socio-political questions within the scope of the Festival. Although the pandemic remains in the forefront for many people, organisations, institutions and companies, the questions, topics and perspectives this festival brings to the table are not any less relevant. In fact, they are more important than ever – and with things having changed so dramatically since early 2020, they have even developed new facets and dimensions. Thank you very much to Sandbox Collective and the jury members, thanks to the participating artists and thanks to all the people who will login to enjoy this amazing Festival!

DR. CLAUD HEIMES

DIRECTOR

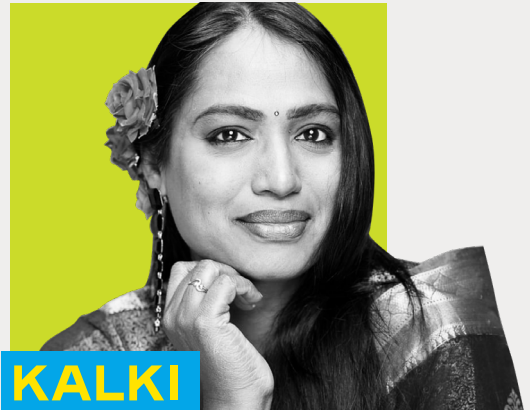
**GOETHE-INSTITUT /
MAX MUELLER BHAVAN BANGALORE**

MEET OUR JURY

**IRAWATI
KARNIK**

Irawati Karnik is a Mumbai-based writer, playwright, screenwriter, translator, dramaturg and actor.

“Being one of the jury members for Gender Bender this year was for me an enlightening experience. It gave me a glimpse into a diverse bunch of forward thinking individuals and their often radical and consistently innovative work. The application process seemed simple and open but thorough. It allowed for a wide range of multi-disciplinary work to be included. What was especially enjoyable was also that the four jury members including myself came from very different backgrounds. We were given sufficient time to familiarize ourselves with and understand all the submissions. Even the final selection process was a rigorous one. Each of us brought our notes about each project and along with members of Sandbox discussed each application in detail before arriving at the final list. It was interesting to see that we often chose the same projects for different reasons and took our time to debate our views with one another whenever we did not see eye to eye. A lot of thought and care was put into arriving at the final list.”

**KALKI
SUBRAMANIAM**

Kalki Subramaniam is a Chennai-based Transgender rights activist and artist who works with art, poetry, performance art and film.

“Being on the jury and selecting the grantees was a very interesting and rewarding experience. It was a tough job because almost all proposals were good. It was quite difficult to choose the best of the best. As a team, we discussed in detail on each proposal and selected the final list. It was a wonderful creative experience being the jury for this year’s Gender Bender, so much to learn from every artist.”



**RANJANA
DAVE**

Ranjana Dave is a Delhi-based dance practitioner, writer, pedagogue, curator and researcher.

“Congratulations to the Gender Bender grantees and to all applicants. I am thankful to have been a part of the process and to learn so much about the work people are doing. The proposals submitted offered a strong rationale and clear propositions. They mapped a very rich landscape of thought and practice across a range of disciplines, and socio political and geopolitical standpoints. The proposals asked crucial questions in gender, embedding them deeply in lived experience. Arriving at a short list of grantees was a fiendish task indeed. I look forward to seeing them frame and realise their propositions at Gender Bender 2020.”



VIJETA

Vijeta Kumar is a Bangalore-based writer, author and Asst. Professor of English and Journalism at St. Joseph’s College of Arts and Science.

“It was a pleasure to be on the jury for Gender Bender. In each of the selections this year, I see and want to remember the stunning capacity of art to accommodate questions, ideas, and desires that have little to no room in this mad, unfair world we live in. And how even in the most dreadful of times, we still have something like this to remind ourselves of why we do what we do.”

MEET OUR GRANTEES

Aamir was born in Muzaffarpur, Bihar and holds a BFA (painting) from Jamia Millia Islamia University. He graduated first class in 2017 and has been working in New Delhi ever since. Aamir has been obsessed with the themes of sexuality, gender, desire, intimacy and love. His work has been exhibited both nationally and internationally, with many shows focused on gender, sexuality and identity.

The project explores the Launda Naach (loosely translates to the boy dance) of Bihar and how these dancers are minority artists marginalized by society. Aamir feels their art and stories resonate with his previous work. This series will explore how Launda Naach's artistic heritage sets itself apart from generic Band Baaja (musical procession) and its popular mainstream appeal.



ARTIST PAINTER

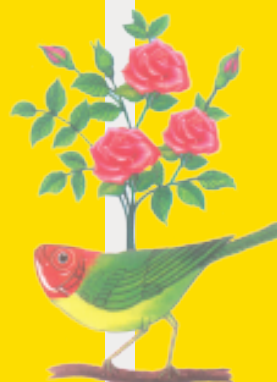
AAMIR RABBANI

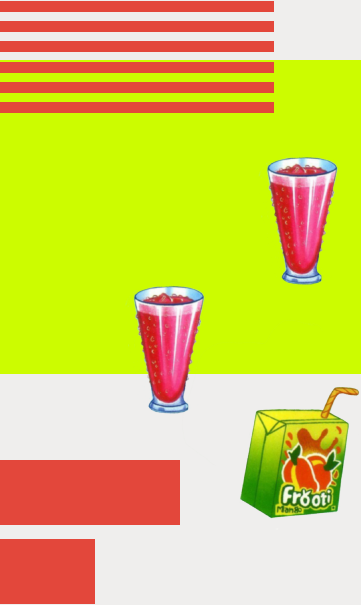


**ANONNYA****BANIK****ACTIVIST**

Anonnya is a transgender activist, spearheading a movement for transgender and Hijra rights in Bangladesh. As a dancer they have performed extensively both nationally, and internationally using art as a medium to communicate ideas and to heal the wounds inflicted by a society that is both indifferent and oppressive.

Anonnya feels that civil society restricts gender to a binary, resulting in the overlooking of violence against transgender people, and a lack of narrative based on their suffering. Anonnya aims to create a dance performance drawing from the narratives of pain and discrimination faced by the transgender and Hijra community of South Asia in living their daily lives.





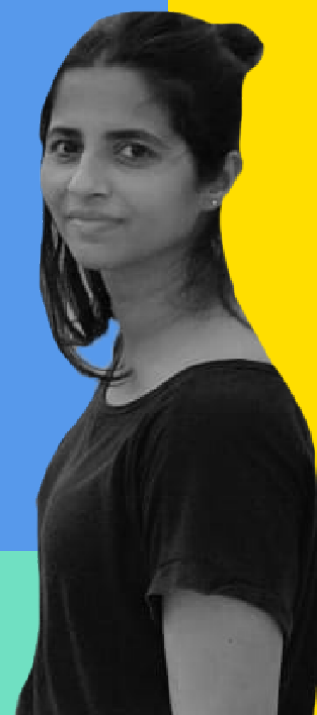
Anoushka is a Chennai-based dancer. Her choreographic practice currently looks at framing ideas and experiences of physicality that negotiate the notion of perception and the quality of attention and experience proposed by live performance. Her recent works include *To Be Danced*, *In Rooms* and *Restricted View*. She is now working on *What Talk of Body*.

What Talk of Body stems from a few questions around the body that look at the ways we locate, unlearn and relocate our bodies and being. It tries to take on the actuality, precarity and possibility of a technology-dominated future and how we could bring the conversation to a questioning, critical, practice of the body through live performance.



DANCER

**ANOUSHKA
KURIEN**



VISUAL
STORYTELLERSAMIDHA
GUNJAL

CG SALAMANDER

WRITER



C G Salamander is a comic journalist and writer whose work has appeared in The Nib, Mint, BuzzFeed, and Indian Quarterly to name a few. His picture book Puu was published by Scholastic last year. Salamander is also a writer and an editor.

Samidha is an illustrator and animator who has worked on numerous children's books and comics. She works out of Studio Dhamisa in Ahmednagar, and loves using the visual medium to explore a wide range of topics and themes.

Scavenging is a nonfiction comic that aims to examine and educate people about the inhuman practice of manual scavenging. The comic aims to cover the wide array of work that falls under the umbrella term of manual scavenging; examine the gender and caste breakup of manual scavengers; and finally explore the shortcomings of the government in enforcing the ban and providing adequate rehabilitation.



Chikka Dodda Art Lab i.e. 'small big art lab' is a Bangalore based 'indie' art and activism lab founded by Pranav Patadiya and Satchit Puranik. While Pranav works with Cloutail, he also pursues theatre. Satchit is a multilingual writer, theatre maker & film maker with work in around 9 languages, and over a thousand shows across a dozen countries.

Mard Hamdard / Male Empath is a collage film which builds onto the footage of other Hindustani films (Mainstream Bombay cinema & beyond) to decode, demystify and deconstruct the portrayals of (non) toxic masculinity (ies) in 107 years of Indian cinema. The essay documentary revives a humane, progressive, vulnerable, and most importantly, empathic look at the Indian Male on celluloid.



CHIKKA DODDA ART LAB



SATCHIT PURANIK

ART LABOURER



**PRANAV
PATADIYA**

EXPERIMENTER

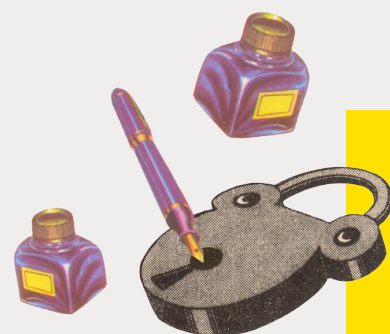
**GARGI**

CREATIVE WRITER

HARITHAKAM

Gargi is an activist, writer and a filmmaker who works at understanding identities at the margins, and makes associations and alliances by creating work which is relevant not just as a matter of aesthetics but also to the undocumented histories visible to her.

The short film *Madhuravanam* (The Sweet Forest) is an attempt to have a closer look at a queer friend who is no longer alive; A friend who underwent the notorious 'conversion therapy' after coming out as a bisexual, a tragic episode in a short life. The film will celebrate her existence marked intensely with poetry and other arts.

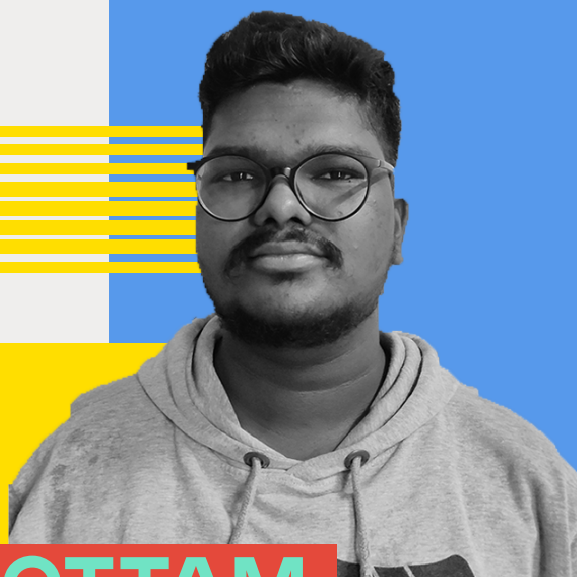


Nandagopan is a theatre practitioner based in Kerala. Having studied at the Thrissur School of Drama, he works with fellow artists to create meaningful dialogue and social change through his theatre practice. He has collaborated and worked with several theatre companies across the state in recent times on experimental theatre productions.

Nandagopan's project aims to explore the complexities associated with gender discourse. At the heart of the theatre production is a man who travels through the centuries, and his encounter with a transgender person. The plot of the play dwells on gender conflicts, and conversations that follow between the duo.



NANDAGOPAN
THEATRE PRACTITIONER

**PURSHOTTAM****PAWAR****ARTIST PAINTER**

Purshottam uses paintings to express his emotions and feelings in his work. He chooses subjects inspired by observing everyday events and objects. His works consist of depth, space division, sensitiveness, motion, values and colour scheme. Through his works, he aims to understand himself better.

This project aims to represent the 'third gender' in his paintings and bust the myths about transgender persons that people find hard to accept. Inspired by Frida Kahlo's self-portraits, he intends to embed himself in these works. The work aims to build bridges between genders by focussing on the everyday issues of his subjects like civil rights, employment, health care and adoption rights.



Rashmi is a theatre director, actor, translator and facilitator. The intersection of Kannada and English theatre as well as that of playback and proscenium theatre is an area that she loves working with.

She also has a background in psychology, which she often uses as a tool in playmaking. She is drawn to gender, mental health and absurdism in performance.

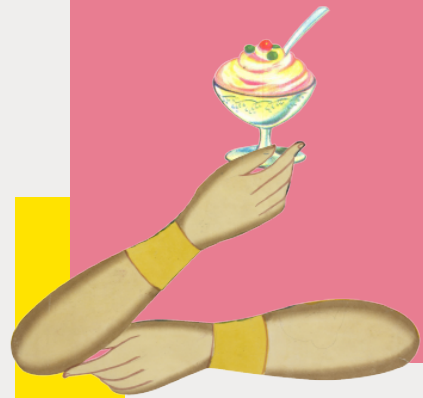
Amma makkalu ellinda bartave (Mommy where do babies come from?), is an anthology of Kannada stories about women's sex, sexuality and desire.

In the largely patriarchal setup of Kannada theatre, it looks at reclaiming the space of curiosity, permissions, beliefs and delights of sex through exploring alternative ways of sharing and co-creating stories, from the lens of transaction analysis.



**RASHMI
RAVIKUMAR**

THESPIAN



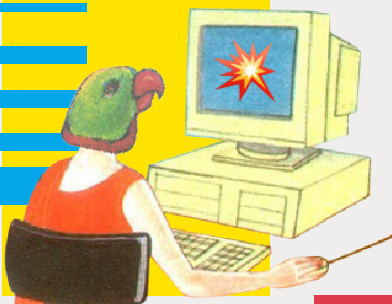


REYA ARTIST
AHMED

Reya is a 24-year-old visual artist exploring feminism, queer identity and her experiences of growing up in a Bengali-Muslim household through an interdisciplinary crossroad of illustration, animation, architectural and editorial design. At present, she is core organizer and curator at The Queer Muslim Project, one of the largest global online networks of LGBTIQ+ Muslims.

The Queer Muslim Monthly is a resistance against the invisibility of intersectional identities and attempts to dismantle the idea of a newspaper as a source of information which often tends to leave out issues, concerning the most marginalized.

It will collate art projects, art installations, video installations, comics, illustrations, interviews of and by Queer Muslim artists in the form of an online, graphic newspaper.





Sangram, an aspiring dancer, has reconciled with his lack of conformity (genre-wise) by exploring movement in different spaces. A movement enthusiast with a love for performance, he is currently involved as a creator and associate artist with multiple collectives based in Kolkata and otherwise. He also identifies himself as a curious mover.

He derives his source of movement from a 70s club-style, namely Waacking/Whacking, and is curious to understand how to contemporize the movement with a series of explorations with fellow artists to address the basic question,

“Can Waacking/Whacking evolve from being a physical language of gender to building upon the vocabulary of gender outside the binary forms of movement?”



**SANGRAM
MUKHOPADHYAY**

DANCER

**SHRISHTI**

VISUAL ARTIST

CHATTERJEE

Shrishti is a visual artist and researcher. Having grown up in different cities, it became important for her to ponder on identity and migration in urban spaces. She hopes to be able to create work that examines everyday experiences of living in the city through the mediums of film, design and visual storytelling.

The elusive world of the 'bachelor woman' hopes to reframe the identity of the single migrant woman in the city. It does so while examining the private spaces of women and their negotiations with privacy, safety, freedom and pleasure. Public places in cities offer little to no access and safety for women, what then can reclaiming private spaces like one's home mean for the collective experience of belonging to the city?



Shruthi is a musician, composer and educator. She works at the intersection of form and label - incorporating the classical and the folk, multiple languages, poetry and movement into music. At the heart of her work are the mystic poets of South Asia, especially those at the margins of gender and caste. She has performed extensively, both in India and overseas.

Sylvia is praised for her equally fierce and bold dramatic performance style; she is one of the leading recorder players worldwide, specialised in contemporary music and improvisation. She plays solo recitals and concerts, fosters international collaborations with other artists in general, and engages in #ArtAsActivism. Sylvia performs with her project Catenation and her band Coma Cluster Void. Resonance - Dissonance is a musical diary by two female musicians, made as a response to our lives around the pandemic that challenges notions of what musicality and melody is. Is melody musical, is dissonance musical? Through a call-and-response every day, the two artists will weave together the stories of their lives across continents in a sonic piece for the times.



KLANGWIDERWORTGEBERIN

SYLVIA
HINZ



SHRUTHI
VISHWANATH

STRIRER



SOHINI S

VISUAL PRACTITIONER

Sohini is an illustrator from the suburbs of Bengal. She uprooted herself from her hometown to work for a livelihood, but has always returned to her roots for her most honest and intimate expressions. She finds it difficult to locate herself in the heteronormative matrix and self-admittedly continues to hang in limbo.

Sohini is building a book with some interactive tools that reimagine the rhymes and songs from Bangla oral traditions and talk about gender roles, in the light of nightmares from her own childhood. She will also be using texts gathered from friends, exhibiting similar stories and characters. She plans to keep the texts unchanged and restructure them visually, primarily using graphic illustration and embroidery.



Vikram is a Mumbai-based theatre practitioner and stage commentator. He has written extensively for various publications and is the artistic director of Theatre Jil Jil Ramamani, and co-founder of InQueerAble, a platform for queer theatre. In the theatre, his most recent work as writer and director was the play *Those Left Behind Things*, a play on asylum seekers.

The Adventures of Jil Jil is a whimsical tale about a comic character from a Tamil classic. Some say she has climbed out of the pages of a giant illustrated book written by a famous poet, who could never claim her back. Jil Jil is unbridled and spontaneous and defies description. The play has been developed as part of Indian Ensemble's First Draft Ideas Lab.

VIKRAM

PHUKAN

**THEATRE
PRACTITIONER
/ WRITER**



20 GENDER BENDER 20



Gender Bender is a joint project of
Sandbox Collective and the
Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan.

Gender Bender is conceived,
conceptualised, and curated by
Sandbox Collective.