

PRESS RELEASE



"Invisible Dance" Offers Alternative Perspectives on Contemporary Dance Practices in Seven Works by Indonesian and Indian Artists



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Seven works by artists and art collectives from Indonesia and India were created in the choreography project "Invisible Dance". This project explores questions and offers alternative points of view with regard to contemporary dance practices. Videos of these seven works have been released and can be watched on the [Goethe-Institut Indonesien YouTube channel](#).

Departing from the notion of "invisibility" as in Augusto Boal's invisible theatre and social choreography, the Goethe-Institut initiated a process-based art laboratory project for performative arts in India and Indonesia.

After an initial meeting at Tanzplattform in March 2022 in Berlin, the Indonesian Garasi Performance Institute and Indian choreographer, Mandeep Raikhy developed "Invisible Dance" jointly as a platform for artists to explore invisible connections between social spaces or experiences and dance in many different ways.

Seven artists and art collectives from different rural or decentralized spaces in Indonesia and India with specific context-based research ideas were invited to join the platform. From Indonesia, there was Lembana Artgroecosystem, Komunitas KAHE, as well as Enji Sekar. As for India, there was Abhijeet/Moodzi & Srilakshmi, Lapdiang A. Syiem, Rituparna Pal, and Gram Art Project Collective.

'Pesta' observation to sensory experiences

In the work entitled *Dikideng: Dance from Party Culture in Maumere*, Komunitas KAHE investigates festivals and festive gatherings of the population in Maumere, Flores, as a social choreography.

"This work aims to observe '*pesta*' (party) as a social choreography or dramaturgy from the viewpoints of three subjects that is so crucial for the '*pesta*' and existing '*pesta*' culture in Maumere: *mama-mama* (mothers) who prepare the dishes, *ana kolong* (party crashers) and *opreter* (a man appointed to be responsible for the songs throughout a party)," said Kartika Solapung from Komunitas KAHE.

The findings from their observation of the stories, interactions, and movements of the *mama-mama*, *ana kolong*, and *opreter* are used as a base

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to create a dance that is familiarly known as “*goyang ragam*”. Using the collective creation approach, Komunitas KAHE coded the movements of the party actors and composed them in a single structure and tried this dance on high school students.

Meanwhile, a short documentary and a guidebook titled *24 Hours in Lembâna* by Lembâna Artgroecosystem is an attempt to map specific spatial and temporal dimensions of their hometown in Sumenep, East Java.

Fikril Akbar from Lembâna Artgroecosystem says, “*24 Hours in Lembâna* is crucial not only because we want to see the choreography as a framework for viewing the geocultural aspects of Lembâna, but also as a research mode to study, explore, and map knowledge about the spatial quality of Lembâna, along with the values that operate within it”.

Another work from Indonesia was created by Enji Sekar and her collaborators with backgrounds in performance arts, entitled *Interconnection: Sensorium Choreography and Dance of the Daily* which focuses on choreographic observations relating to the four senses of hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling in Demangan and Pathuk market in Yogyakarta.

“We chose two medium-sized traditional markets as our lab based on an assumption that a traditional market is a space that arises from diversity where multisensory experiences are supposed to be produced. We asked the collaborators to explore the market guided by sensory experiences and encouraged them to take detailed notes while continuously identifying what they receive through their senses,” explained Enji.

Besides documentation, the group also organized their findings through layers of maps. The actual map of the two markets was combined with different sensory maps and created new visibility for those invisible people and things.

Four works from India

From India, four works were produced for the “Invisible Dance” project. Abhijeet/Moodzi and Srilakshmi’s project entitled *Social Dance Experiments in Ahmedabad* takes place in different pockets of the city Ahmedabad and its public spaces. They engage with different demographics and witness how an experiment like this may respond to their socio-political context.

The work of Lapdiang A. Syiem, *Laitiam*, is an exploration of the Khasi folk narrative of “U Sier Lapalang,” a story of the stag who climbs up from the plains of what we know as present-day Bangladesh into the Khasi Hills only to be captured and killed by hunters. His mother also climbs up in search of her son and encounters the kill. She lets out a dirge, a lamentation which, as they say, is a sound that has taught the Khasi people how to mourn and grieve.

Rituparna Pal from Chennai showcases her work, *Class Notes of a Savarna Dancer*. Bharatanatyam has a violent, casteist history of appropriation which rarely finds a place in the annals of institutional history. In the early 20th century, the hereditary practitioners of the dance were criminalized for their profession and privileged-caste dancers entered the stage in the name of “revival” of the art form. Rituparna aims to acknowledge this history through her work and develop an anti-caste Bharatanatyam practice.

Gram Art Project Collective—a group of women living in a rural environment, average Indian women, so they say—created a durational performance

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entitled *Cotton Stainers* consisting of different ways of sharing their memories, hopes, dreams, secrets, and burdens.

All videos can be accessed through the following link: bit.ly/invisibledancevideos.

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About Goethe-Institut

The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institute, active worldwide. We promote the study of German abroad and encourage international cultural exchange. We also provide a comprehensive image of Germany through information on German political, social and cultural life. Our various cultural and educational programs support intercultural dialogue and enable cultural participation. These various programs strengthen the structures of civil society and support global mobility.

About Garasi Performance Institute

The Garasi Performance Institute (GPI) sees itself as an open platform for interdisciplinary artists and cultural professionals who address different performance methods in the sense of an aesthetic and social practice.

About Mandeep Raikhy

Mandeep Raikhy is a dance practitioner based in New Delhi. He trained at Trinity Laban and worked with Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company, London, for several years. Mandeep has been committed to developing a supportive environment for contemporary dance in India through several initiatives.

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