

SUMMER FELLOWSHIP PROJECTS

Audio-Visual Exhibition of Musical Instruments from ARCE and CA&A

This project will result in an audio-visual research resource on traditional musical instruments documented in the Sound and Visual archives of the two research centers of the AIIS: Archives and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology (ARCE), and the Center for Art and Archaeology (CA&A). CA&A has an image collection of musical instruments, depicted on the walls of monuments built across India from the 2nd century BCE to 18th century CE. This collection of about 500 images is described in a digital database with brief information on the site, monument, location, date, period, and style. The images with their corresponding information are scanned and available [online](#) in broad categories of string, percussion, and wind instruments. ARCE has audio and video recordings of instrument making and playing from many parts of India and has been preparing a database of instruments with sample recordings. In addition, the ARCE library has a rich collection of books and articles on musical instruments. Project work will include metadata creation for the instruments, combining, to the extent possible, the historical resources from CA&A with the current ARCE resources, and creating audio-visual samples to augment them. It may be necessary to match historical depictions with the closest or related depictions from the contemporary period.

Methodology

The project will use the CA&A images of musical instruments as a base. It will require studying the 500 images of the CA&A archive and working through the ARCE archive to create a set for which correspondences can be found in the holdings of the two Centers. The first step will be creation of a database combining the existing information from the CA&A data and information from the existing ARCE database. (Note: the ARCE database is a work in progress and does not cover all of instruments available in the archives.) Subsequently, the database will be enhanced by consulting library resources and reviewing the sonic collections of the ARCE for additional recordings, images, and information from field notes. Library and online resources will also be consulted to supplement information on the CA&A images.

Deliverables

The final product will be an audio-visual exhibition combining images of historical instruments and performers with contemporary counterpart images and audio-visual samples, incorporating an ethnomusicological approach with historiographical sensitivity. The exhibition will include the geographic provenance of the historical artistic depictions with information on the contemporary distribution of instruments, how they are played, the materials used in their creation, the communities who play them, the musical genres performed and, where possible, information on instrument making.

Project Supervisors

Shubha Chaudhuri, Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, and Vandana Sinha, Director, Center for Art and Archaeology, AIIS

SOUND PROJECTS

Oral Epics and Narratives – Digital Story Telling

ARCE holds several collections of oral epics. Some of those epics have been explored in English monographs. The epics for consideration in this project have digitized audio and video recordings in addition to transcriptions and, in some cases, translations of the texts. This project will involve studying the monograph related to your chosen epic and the related recording collections. The project will result in a digital exhibition or publication on an extract from the selected epic. The end product will include illustrations, texts, voice, and narration, along with audio recordings. The digital exhibit or publication will provide a general introduction to the oral epic and then describe the chosen extract with an emphasis on illustrating the flavor and exposing the richness of the narrative forms. The introduction will be for a general audience and preferably suited for children. Familiarity with the language of the epic will be a major asset, though ARCE staff will be able to assist to some extent on the languages involved. The ARCE library has many publications that can be consulted in addition to the book that is recommended. Online resources can also be used. This project will be of special value to those with interests in graphic and/or visual expression.

The oral epics available for this project are:

Genre	Language	Region	Title	Collection
Dhola	Hindi	Uttar Pradesh	<i>Raja Nal and the Goddess: The North Indian Epic in Performance</i>	Susan Wadley Collection
Katha	Marwari	Rajasthan	<i>A Carnival of Parting: The Tales of King Bharthari and King Gopi Chand, as Sung and Told by Madhunath of Ghatiyal</i>	Ann Gold Collection
Alha	Hindi	Madhya Pradesh Uttar Pradesh	Multiple publications by several authors	Karine Schomer Collection
Villupattu	Tamil	Tamil Nadu	<i>Singing of Birth and Death: Texts in Performance</i>	Stuart Blackburn Collection
Annamar Kadhai	Tamil	Tamil Nadu	<i>The Three Twins: The Telling of a South Indian folk Epic</i>	Brenda Beck Collection

Methodology

The project begins with review of the monograph published on the chosen epic and careful review of the ARCE collection on that epic, including the existing metadata, field notes, transcriptions, and translations, with the objective of understanding the underlying story line. A portion of the epic will then be chosen for further detailed treatment. It will be important to reference online materials about digital storytelling to create the project deliverables.

Deliverables

A digital exhibition or publication which introduces and illustrates a portion of the chosen oral epic. It should be aimed at a general audience, preferably including children. The project will include augmenting existing metadata for archival records to the extent possible.

Project Supervisor

Shubha Chaudhuri, Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, AIIS

The Song Lines of Arnold Bake

This project draws upon the extensive collection of recordings made by Arnold Bake, a Dutch ethnomusicologist who travelled throughout India in the 1930s making recordings of music. The recordings are in a great variety of languages and genres. The Bake collection principally consists of audio recordings but is supplemented by some silent films which have also been digitised.

The ARCE collection was deposited by Nazir Jairazbhoy and the British Library. Professors Nazir Jairazbhoy and Amy Catlin carried out the Bake Restudy Project beginning in 1983, following some of the routes taken by Bake and making recordings in the same communities a half century after Bake's field work. Their findings are also catalogued, digitised, and can be incorporated into the project. All of these materials are fully digitised and catalogued, so no particular language proficiency is required for the project. ARCE has created two CDs (on lullabies and work songs) with liner notes.

The goal of the project is to create an offline exhibition using software specially designed for kiosks at ARCE. The software includes templates for the creation of themes and subthemes, a mapping interface, and a template for creating timelines. The program's interfaces support the integration of audio and video recordings, documents, and images. The exhibition created under this project will provide an interactive interface to this rich and varied collection.

Methodology

The first step will be to read about Arnold Bake and to go through the files, metadata and recording collections at ARCE. The next step will be to develop skills with the exhibition software, using an existing exhibition, "Jazz in India," as a model. Subsequently, the summer fellow will design an interface: planning the themes and subthemes as well as sorting and identifying recordings for each theme. Materials will then be chosen for the mapping interface and the timeline in order to make the entire collection accessible and to allow users to interact, listen, and view the recordings and visual materials. The aim is to bring the entire collection into the exhibition as it is offline so that it can be used to listen to or view the entire body of recordings and associated resources.

Deliverables

Create an offline exhibition, "Song Lines of Arnold Bake," or using an alternate title, which provides an offline interactive interface for exploring the ARCE Arnold Bake collection. The project will include augmenting existing metadata for archival records to the extent possible.

Project Supervisor

Shubha Chaudhuri, Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, AIIS

Bauls of Bengal: An Introduction

Bauls are wandering minstrels who sing of spiritual themes. The tradition constitutes a syncretic religious and musical sect. The ARCE archive contains an extensive collection of video recordings of the Bauls of Bengal deposited by Sally Grossman on behalf of the Baul Archive. The recordings include performances and interviews, some arranged, and many conducted at the fairs or “melas” where Bauls perform. The collection is fully digitised and catalogued. There are many translations accompanying the recordings. The ARCE archive also has historic recordings of the 1930s made by the Dutch ethnomusicologist Arnold Bake which could be used in conjunction with the Baul Archive Collection of videos.

This project involves creating an online exhibition on the [Google Arts & Culture](#) website, which will include an introduction to the Bauls. Familiarity with Bangla will be an asset, though not necessary.

Methodology

The first step will involve a thorough familiarization with the Bauls through background reading on the tradition. Subsequent activities will include exploration of the existing collections with an eye to selection of materials for an introductory exhibition. ARCE has other collections of Baul recordings which can be referenced as part of the background study, but the final exhibition will use the Baul Archive collection. Google Arts & Culture staff will be available to provide guidance and to introduce the digital tools available under that ambitious, international program.

Deliverables

An exhibition on the Bauls of Bengal (title to be chosen) on the Google Arts & Culture website. The project will include augmenting existing metadata for archival records to the extent possible.

Project Supervisor

Shubha Chaudhuri, Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, AIIS

Pioneers of Jazz in India

ARCE holds two large collections on jazz in India. Created by Naresh Fernandes and Niranjhan Jhaveri, the collections include audio and video recordings, ephemera, posters, photographs, and publications. Many of the materials have been digitised and are available in an offline digital exhibition at ARCE called Jazz in India. A set of exhibitions titled “Pioneers of Jazz in India” has been partially created. These include an introductory exhibition on the topic and a series of exhibitions on the jazz musicians Chic Chocolate, Rudy Cotton, and Mickey Correa. Materials from the collections have been selected and sorted, and initial entries made in a template. This project involves exploration of these jazz resources, completing three provisional exhibitions, and creating at least two more exhibitions.

All the materials are in English. Consequently, there is no language proficiency required.

Methodology

The first step will involve study of Naresh Fernandes, *The Taj Mahal Foxtrot: The Story of Bombay's Jazz Age* (New Delhi: Roli Books, 2012). The book provides useful background information for the exhibitions to be completed or created. Subsequently, the Fellow will familiarize themselves with the collections of Naresh Fernandes and Niranjhan Jhaveri. Meetings will then be arranged with the [Google Arts & Culture](#) team for guidance on their current guidelines and templates, revision of the existing Arts and Culture templates, adding, editing and supplementing as appropriate. The Fellow will also other Jazz pioneers in India for whom material is available to complete the exhibits.

Deliverables

The project will result in a set of exhibitions on “Pioneers of Jazz in India,” on the Google Arts & Culture website. The project will also include augmenting existing metadata for archival records to the extent possible.

Project Supervisor

Shubha Chaudhuri, Director Archives and Research Center for Ethnomusicology, AIIS

VISUAL ARTS PROJECTS

Curating a Virtual Exhibition on Stepwell – Reservoirs of Western India

The landscape of Gujarat and Rajasthan is dotted with monuments of a kind unlike those seen elsewhere in the world. Those monuments are India's unique contribution to the architectural heritage of the world. They are reservoirs of water, or stepped wells, that is, subterranean structures consisting of a deep well accessed from the ground level via a long flight of steps. Stepwells served as reservoirs for replenishable and rechargeable groundwater and played a key role in India's traditional water management system. These water bodies were excavated within palaces and pleasure gardens and along highways over a period extending from the 1st century CE to modern times.

CA&A has documented hundreds of stepwells from Western India and created a large repertoire of photographs and architectural drawings of these structures. Through this project, CA&A seeks to raise awareness about the practical and aesthetic value of stepwell-reservoirs of Western India which are being lost due to rapid urbanization. The project's goal is to develop a virtual exhibition drawing upon the Center's online collection of photographs, drawings, and publications. The exhibition will illustrate artistic, technological, and historical details of select stepwell-reservoirs, demonstrate the relationship of the structures to people at the time of construction and in contemporary times through highlighting the uses of stepwells at different times, their significance in maintaining the ecological balance, and the role they play as an important unit in traditional water management systems.

Methodology

The project will be undertaken in two phases, each phase to be a month long. In phase one, the Fellow will gather information including images and published materials from the online and offline archives and the CA&A library. Videos, 360-degree virtual walkthroughs, and other related contents may be sourced from the Internet. The catalogue of CA&A's travelling exhibition on stepwells of Western India will serve as the key publication on the theme. The Fellow will interact with conservation architects who can give them information about contemporary restoration efforts. A list of select stepwells will be prepared for the online exhibition and related materials will be compiled. In phase two, the exhibition design will be decided, and the online display will be created.

Deliverables

The project will result in an online exhibition which will be launched on the [Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds](#) (VMIS) at the end of the project.

Project Supervisor

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

Mughal Emperor Jahangir's Album of Exotic Animals, Birds and Flowers

The Mughal Emperor Jahangir (1605-1627 CE) had a fascination for getting exotic flowers, birds and animals illustrated. He credited himself with a connoisseur's eyes in his autobiography for recognizing uniqueness. His biography is full of his encounters with a variety of unique flora and fauna brought to his court as gifts by diplomats, explorers, or merchants. His descriptions are supported by exquisite folios painted in his studio by his favorite artists who were discreetly assigned tasks appropriate to their expertise by the emperor. The folios depict birds, animals, and flowers from remote places in India, such as the mountain goat and Indian antelope, and from other parts of the world, such as the tulip from Europe and Central Asia, the turkey from North America, the pheasant from the Black Sea area and the zebra from Africa. Stray painted folios from his albums of exotics are found all over the world in museums and private collections. CA&A has documented many folios depicting birds and animals from these repositories. This project will focus on creating a virtual album of ten such specimens from the collection of portraits of animals, flowers, and birds painted during Jahangir's time. Each of these visual specimens will be described based on the information available in Jahangir's biography, their places of origin, current visuals and videos, information about those species, and so forth. Special attention will be given to tracing trade and diplomatic expanse of the Mughal dynasty during Jahangir's time through the objects of Mughal flora and fauna art. Project findings will be made available for access as a virtual album on the [Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds](#). The descriptions of related art objects in the CA&A photo-archives will also be augmented with this information.

Methodology

This two-month fellowship will be divided into two phases. In the first phase, the Fellow will explore the CA&A archives and [online resources](#) to select the art objects to work on. Descriptions of those objects from the English translations of Jahangir's autobiography *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* and biography *Jahangir Nama* will be culled out. Publications on Mughal flora and fauna will be consulted which are available in CA&A library. Videos and stills of the birds, animals and flowers in the current times will be collected from the Internet. In the second phase, the virtual album will be curated in WordPress. The Fellow will be free to adopt various technological tools and methods to create the exhibition.

Deliverables

The project will result in a virtual album created in WordPress for the Virtual Museum of Images and Sounds which will contain visuals, audio, video references, maps, and historical data to narrate the stories of those objects which are found in Jahangir's albums.

Project Supervisor

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

[A Peek into Indian Houses: Exploring Furniture Art of the Past](#)

The earliest textual references to Indian furniture are found in Vedic texts. A few cultures in early India had furniture-making traditions. The Mughals introduced to 16th century India aesthetics and techniques for furniture creation from Central Asia and Persia. They popularized decorations in inlaid bone or ivory, enamel, and setting furniture with jewels. The Peacock Throne of Shah Jahan mounted with the Koh-i-Noor diamond is a famous example. Furniture forms, styles, and designs developed further in India with the settlement of Portuguese, Dutch and British colonists who commissioned Indian artisans to produce replicas of European furnishings. The Indo-European style was added to the indigenous styles of wood carving and design. The functions of the furniture items were wide-ranging, being utilitarian, ceremonial, or ornamental. In some cases, they were also indicative of class hierarchy, status, and rank.

CA&A's visual collection features a wide range of images, including photographs and representations of elevated seating, swings, beds, cabinets, niches, dowry chests, and so forth, on coins, paintings, and sculptures. Examples include ivory furniture embellishments and fragments found in Begram, Afghanistan which were crafted in India, Baroque furniture of Goa, imperial thrones, and Gupta coins and sculptural reliefs showing different types of seating platforms (*asanas*). The Fellow will develop an exhibition plan with a focus on one theme related to the art of furniture in India. For example, the exhibition could highlight aspects of material, design, techniques and style, function, depiction of legends and folklore or associated stories and narratives that signify the relevance of furniture in each context. While engaged in the project, the Fellow will create a checklist of the CA&A collection and present the contents in the form of a digital exhibition.

Methodology

During the initial phase of the fellowship, the Fellow will familiarize themselves with the CA&A's collection on furniture and study related exhibitions such as [Beyond the Throne](#) on Google Art & Culture and [Itiha: Stories and Traditions of Vernacular Furniture](#) in addition to reviewing published literature on the topic. They will develop a concept for an exhibition and a checklist of items in the collection that will instantiate the concept. They may refer to other online collections to enrich their perspective and content.

Deliverables

The Fellow will create a digital exhibition on a content sharing platform such as WordPress or [Google Arts & Culture](#). The Fellow will also enhance the existing CA&A metadata for the collection selected for this exhibition.

Project Supervisor

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

Adornment of Bodies in Chola Art

Jewelry has always occupied an important place in Indian art, where ornaments in sculptural reliefs were carved to make the body appear complete, desirable, auspicious, or protected. During the era of the Tamil Chola empire (9-13th century CE), ornaments were a declaration of power and prestige. The Chola rulers of the region commissioned ornaments of gold to adorn deities in their temples. Deities were adorned with a variety of jewels such as crowns, ear-ornaments, necklaces, armbands, bracelets, anklets, and sashes. In turn, stylization of royal bodies and artistic depiction of elite patrons was modelled on divine images. Similar jewelry was later adopted by female temple dancers, and gradually those designs became a part of bridal jewelry. Contemporary jewelry design often incorporates traditional and modern motifs featuring temple architectural elements such as the temple tower (*gopuram*), mythical creatures, fruits, flowers and vines. CA&A's collection consists of photographs of adorned figures in religious and secular contexts on the walls of over 100 Chola monuments and bronzes from museums. All of the images have corresponding digital metadata.

The Fellow will develop an exhibition focusing on a single and integral part of body adornment or ornamentation developed during the Chola era and its continuation into present. For example, the exhibition could focus on sustenance and changes in designs and the material of temple jewelry or the evolving context of the temple jewelry. The project will highlight the sustenance and changes in design by comparing sculptural reliefs and contemporary jewelry designs. The Fellow will also enhance the existing CA&A database of the holdings chosen for this project at the CA&A photographic archive.

Methodology

The Fellow will begin by learning about images in the CA&A collection depicting jeweled figures and will research the temple jewelry tradition of Tamil Nadu and its prevalence today. Subsequently, the Fellow will develop a plan for an exhibition, a checklist from the collection, followed by a digital exhibition using multimedia formats.

Deliverables

A digital exhibition will be created on a content sharing platform such as WordPress or [Google Arts & Culture](#). The Fellow will also enhance the existing CA&A metadata for the collection that will be selected for this exhibition.

Project Supervisor

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