

SERENDIPITY ARTS FESTIVAL 2024

Serendipity Arts Festival 2024: Programming Highlights

A Convergence of Creativity Across Disciplines

September 2024: The Serendipity Arts Festival returns to Panaji, Goa, from December 15th to 22nd, 2024, for its ninth edition, promising an unparalleled cultural experience that spans diverse artistic disciplines. Founded by Mr. Sunil Kant Munjal, Serendipity Arts Festival has grown into one of South Asia's largest and most anticipated arts festivals, offering a unique platform for innovation, interdisciplinary practices, and cultural exchange.

Organised by the Serendipity Arts Foundation, an initiative established to promote and nurture the arts, the festival has consistently sought to bring together artists, curators, and audiences in a shared celebration of creativity and cultural exchange. The festival stands as a testament to the vision of the Serendipity Arts Foundation in promoting the arts across disciplines.

This year, a distinguished lineup of curators bring their expertise and vision to 200+ projects, at 22+ venues, ensuring a vibrant and diverse showcase across multiple disciplines:

Enclosed below are key programming highlights for each discipline along with additional special projects that will be showcased at the festival:

Curators for Serendipity Arts Festival 2024

Dance: Geeta Chandran and Jayachandran Palazhy

Visual Arts: Veerangana Solanki and Thukral & Tagra

Music: Zubin Balaporia and Bickram Ghosh

Culinary Arts: Edible Issues

Address

C-340, Defence Colony,
New Delhi-110024

Phone

011 4554 6121

Email

info@serendipityarts.org
media@serendipityarts.org

Website

www.serendipityartsfestival.com

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Theatre: Quasar Thakore Padamsee and Sankar Venkateswaran

Craft: Sandeep Sangaru and Kristine Michael

Accessibility: Salil Chaturvedi

Special Projects 2024

Performance Art: Preethi Athreya

Stand-up Comedy: Comedy Wagon

Music in the Art Park: Gaya Tideman

B-Side Project facilitator: Zainab Wani (Zequenx)

AI: Somewhere Arts

Bhupen Khakhar: Gulam Mohammed Sheikh

Key Programming Highlights by Discipline:

I. Dance: *Curated by Geeta Chandran & Jayachandran Palazhy*

- **Sutra**

This Odissi dance performance, featuring Sharmila Biswas, delves into the evolution of the classical dance form, combining traditional choreography with live music, projections, and an interactive set design. Through its seamless blend of past, present, and future, Sutra pays homage to Odissi's storytelling nature while modernising its expression for contemporary audiences.

- **Aqeedat, Love's Union in the Divine**

Aqeedat, Love's Union in the Divine tells the timeless love story of Sohni and Mahiwal through the classical dance form of Kathak, set against a backdrop of Hindustani classical music. The performance, centred on divine love, brings together rich aesthetics, traditional Punjabi folklore, and live music for an immersive storytelling experience.

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Visual Arts: Curated by **Veerangana Solanki & Thukral & Tagra**

- **Multiplay**

“Multiplay” lies at the core of the visual arts experience — an approach that provides opportunities for respite. Blurring the conventional boundaries of the artist and audience, the works encourage participation and experience that reflect the complexities of our interconnected world. Here, artworks come to life through human interaction and the artwork's evolution within a timeframe. These works engage in a dynamic process that creates ripples, with the artist acting as a facilitator, creating a framework that attempts to address fragility and social and political urgencies.

- **A Haptic Score**

A multisensory experience curated by Veerangana Solanki, “A Haptic Score” allows audiences to engage with art through touch and sound. Designed for accessibility, particularly for visually impaired audiences, this exhibition challenges the idea that art must be experienced through sight alone.

Music: Curated by **Zubin Balaporia & Bickram Ghosh**

- **One World**

This concert, curated by Zubin Balaporia, brings together musician Lou Majaw and members of the pioneering rock band Indus Creed, along with Warren Mendonsa (Blackstratblues) and Pratika Gopinath (Easy Wanderlings), come together in a concert that calls out for humanity's return to unity, peace, and harmony. With a mix of rock, folk, and Indian classical elements, One World emphasises the power of music to transcend cultural divides.

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0114554 6121

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- **The Three Divas**

Curated by Bickram Ghosh, The Three Divas features iconic vocalists Usha Uthup, Aruna Sairam, and Shubha Mudgal. This exceptional event brings together three legendary voices, each renowned for their unique contributions to music across genres. Usha Uthup's vibrant energy, Aruna Sairam's soulful classical renditions, and Shubha Mudgal's timeless melodies will blend in a spellbinding performance that spans decades of musical excellence.

- **Shaam-e-Ghazal**

Curated by Bickram Ghosh, Shaam-e-Ghazal is a concert celebrating the timeless artistry of ghazal legends. This specially curated event honours the musical brilliance of icons such as Ghulam Ali, Mehdi Hasan, and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Mehdi Hasan, Pankaj Udhas and Jagjit Singh, along with esteemed ghazal writers whose works have transcended generations. The concert has been curated by combining avant-garde elements with the profound themes of love, loss, and longing in ghazal to provide a rich wholesome experience.

Culinary Arts: Curated by **Edible Issues**

- **Come Eat With Me**

Come Eat With Me is an interdisciplinary theatre performance that delves into the complex relationship between caste and food through shared stories and a communal meal. Centred around Dalit cuisine, it begins with personal stories and

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oral histories from Sri Vamsi Matta's household, and the community. These are intertwined with literature and academic discussions on caste and food, addressing themes of oppression, solidarity, grief, joy, and the resilience of the human spirit against systemic injustices.

Audience members are invited to eat together and share their own experiences related to caste and food, transforming a practice laden with caste hierarchies into an opportunity for community building. Over time, the performance has integrated into the larger anti-caste and Ambedkarite movement, expanding its scope to include stories from mythology to contemporary realities.

- **Bring-Your-Own-Pickle (BYOP)**

A volunteer-run, community-driven initiative aimed at celebrating cultural diversity through the sharing of achar (pickles). Participants will be invited to bring their homemade or favourite store-bought pickles to taste, share, and exchange. This project emphasises the exchange of culinary traditions, microbes, and ideas related to pickling practices.

- **MOCK WILD Picnic**

The MOCK WILD Picnic Series uses artificial intelligence to prototype hybrid landscapes and cuisines by grafting together complementary—but differently optimised—farming typologies.

For this edition, The Center for Genomic Gastronomy will serve recipes and tasters that combine food forest ingredients with non-animal products that are

high in protein and/or fat. Food Forests make room for wild species in the form of crops and habitat, however, cooking a nutritionally complete meal often requires incorporating non-food forest ingredients.

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To assist in recipe generation, we will use an AI-assisted thinking and tinkering tool for MINIMIZING the use of animal-derived products and MAXIMIZING the use of ingredients from regenerative agroecosystems. What does it taste like to minimize ecological harm and maximize benefits for wild species? Do high-tech, hyper-efficient fats and proteins pair well with regenerative micro seasonal ingredients in the kitchen?

Theatre: Curated by **Quasar Thakore Padamsee & Sankar Venkateswaran**

- **Glitch in the Myth**

“Glitch in the Myth” reinterprets the Ramayana from the perspective of a young woman. This multidisciplinary performance combines spoken word, dance, and music to explore themes of power and resilience, offering fresh insights into the epic through a feminist lens.

- **Do You Know This Song?**

A performance by Mallika Taneja, “Do You Know This Song?” blends live music and storytelling to explore themes of memory and identity. The interactive performance invites audiences to participate in shaping the narrative, creating a dynamic and evolving theatrical experience.

- **Mattiah 22:39**

Set against the backdrop of a devastating drought, Mattiah 22:39 explores themes of survival, love, and morality. The play challenges audiences to think about the ethical dilemmas that arise when resources are scarce, offering a poignant reflection on human relationships in crisis.

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Craft: Curated by **Sandeep Sangaru & Kristine Michael**

- **Abundance in Scarcity: Exploring Ladakh's Sustainable Ingenuity**

This exhibition showcases the resourceful craftsmanship of Ladakh's artisans, who use limited resources to create sustainable designs. Curated by Sandeep Sangaru, it highlights the region's ingenuity in architecture, textiles, and everyday crafts.

- **Past Forward: Remix and Collaborations in Glass and Ceramics**

This exhibition brings together contemporary and traditional artists working in ceramics and glass. Curated by Kristine Michael, it emphasises sustainability and upcycling, showing how ancient crafts can be adapted to address modern challenges.

Accessibility: Curated by **Salil Chaturvedi**

- **Nature's Symphony: A Bird Watching Adventure**

Curated by Salil Chaturvedi in collaboration with The Goa Bird Conservation, is an innovative initiative designed to make bird watching accessible to individuals with vision impairment. The program features two distinct sessions: an outdoor experience where participants can engage with the natural environment using sensory aids, and an indoor session that allows them to explore bird specimens through touch and audio descriptions. This unique approach aims to foster a deeper connection with nature, making the joy of bird watching inclusive and enjoyable for all.

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A three-day festival project designed to foster connections and shared experiences between individuals. The initiative pairs a neurodiverse participant (someone with vision impairment) with a neurotypical attendee, creating opportunities for both groups to enjoy a curated selection of programming together. This unique pairing aims to promote mutual understanding and enrich

the festival experience for all involved.

Special Projects Highlights:

Performance Art | Curated by Preethi Athreya

Around the Corner, Goa: This special project is the third in a series of dance films inspired by urban landscapes. Shot across the streets of Goa, it captures the spontaneous and choreographed movements of two protagonists as they interact with the city's architecture and people. The project uses split-screen techniques to create a sense of navigating multiple street corners, blending abstract narrative with real-time urban dynamics, and inviting the local community to observe or participate. This is only one of a series of special performance art projects showcased at SAF this year.

An Evening of Stand-Up Comedy | Comedy Wagon

Stand-Up Comedy Evening: Curated by Comedy Wagon, this event features a series of performances by well-known comedians, including Shamik Chakrabarti, Urooj Asfaq, Biswa Kalyan Rath, and Shreeja Chaturvedi. The evening promises a mix of witty humour and cultural commentary, exploring contemporary social themes through comedy. The event will also include a solo show, creating a lively and engaging environment at the Kala Academy.

Music in the Art Park | Curated by Gaya Tideman

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Set in the relaxed environs of the riverside Art Park, Music in the Art Park is back at SAF this year, featuring a daily lineup of local talent, including bands like Merak and Stitch in Nine. The focus of the music this year is contrast, oscillating between live and electronic elements.

B-Side

This experimental project delves into the intersection of sound, storytelling, and multimedia. It's designed to be an unconventional musical experience that pushes the boundaries of traditional concerts, incorporating elements like spoken word, electronic soundscapes, and interactive performances. The artists aim to create a narrative that evolves with audience interaction, making each show unique.

The programme, facilitated by Zainab Wani, will feature the following artists:

16 December: Æ:M, Noni-Mouse, EXCISE DEPT

17 December: Te Hao Boon, Caroline Lethô, Paul Purgas

18 December: Hamza Rahimtula, Unnayanaa: Osmosis

19 December: Shantam, Rafiki

20 December: Delhi Sultanate (BFR Sound System)

21 December: Innerworld, Sijya, Flux Vortex

The Game of Whispers | LACMA

A unique AI project by Parag K. Mital which is part of the collection of the Los Angeles Contemporary Museum of Art.

Commissioned by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Serendipity Arts Festival, *The Game of Whispers* is an interactive video game that parallels the political intrigue of the Mughal Empire during Shah Jahan's reign with modern AI-driven disinformation. Set within a rendition of Delhi's Red Fort, it explores how rumours and power dynamics from the past mirror the narrative manipulation of today's technology.

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The game features AI-driven non-playable characters (NPCs) modelled after figures from Mughal miniature paintings in LACMA's collection. These characters, powered by advanced language models like ChatGPT, engage in lifelike conversations that deepen the cycle of disinformation. The piece highlights how falsehoods can ripple through society, influencing decisions and relationships, while also reflecting on how history, much like modern disinformation, can be twisted to serve competing ideologies.

Art x Machine: This curated exhibition showcases groundbreaking works from 5 Indian AI artists, exploring the intersection of art and technology. The exhibition features AI-generated artworks, including paintings, digital installations, and interactive pieces that challenge traditional artistic perceptions. This project highlights India's position at the forefront of AI innovation, demonstrating how technology serves as a catalyst for creative expression and exploring the evolving relationship between human creativity and machine learning.

AI MiniLab: Designed as an introductory space for audiences unfamiliar with AI-driven art, the AI Minilab allows visitors to engage directly with the technology. Through microphones and interactive AI algorithms, participants can create animated visuals and sounds, making it an intuitive and engaging experience. This project aims to demystify AI by turning the audience into creators, highlighting the endless possibilities of AI-assisted creativity.

The Bells | 5AngryMen

The Bells is a theatrical experience of live art, performance, and ringing bells. It is a spectacle of enormous endurance, placing the ensemble at the beginning of an impossible theatrical task that must be completed at whatever cost. The Bells at Serendipity Arts Festival is supported by the Centre for Australia-India Relations. 5AngryMen Theatre Company is supported through the Australian Cultural Fund.

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To Da Bone | La Horde

TO Da Bone is a work that aims to express a certain intimate rebellion of youth. It also seeks to reflect on the role that new media can play, particularly social networks like Facebook or YouTube, in mobilising groups and giving rise to opposition movements. On stage, several dances grouped under the term “post-internet” will be presented, particularly those of Hardstyle and Hard dance such as Tekstyle, Shuffle, Hakken and especially Jumpstyle. This project is supported by the French Institute in India.

Bhupen In Goa | Curated by Gulam Mohammed Sheikh

This comprehensive exhibition, curated by Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, showcases over 300 works by the renowned artist Bhupen Khakhar, including paintings, drawings, ceramic plates, and sculptures. The exhibition is complemented by archival materials like posters and photographs, offering a deep dive into the life and legacy of Khakhar, whose work is known for its bold explorations of social issues and personal narratives.

This is the 9th edition of the festival, of which two were digitally hosted in the years 2020 and 2021, respectively.

To know more about the festival and register for free, please visit www.serendipityartsfestival.com

NOTES TO EDITOR:

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About Serendipity Arts

Serendipity Arts is an arts and cultural development foundation created to encourage and support the arts as a significant contributor to civil society. It aims to promote new creative strategies, artistic interventions, and cultural partnerships that are responsive and seek to address the social, cultural, and environmental milieu of South Asia. Committed to innovation, SA intends to promote and create platforms for creativity, providing the wider public with a unique source of contemporary art and culture. SAF's programmes are designed and initiated through collaborations with partners across a multitude of fields and each intervention uses the arts to impact education, create social initiatives, foster community development and explore multidisciplinary forays in the arts, with a special focus on South Asia.

About Serendipity Arts Festival

The Foundation's primary initiative and largest project, Serendipity Arts Festival is a multi-disciplinary arts initiative held annually every December in Goa. Curated by a panel of eminent artists and curators, the Festival is a long-term cultural project that hopes to instigate positive change across the arts in India on a large scale. Spanning the visual, performing, and culinary arts, the Festival's programming includes music, dance, visual arts, craft, photography, film, and theatre. The Festival addresses pressing social issues such as arts education and pedagogy, cultural patronage, interdisciplinary discourse, and access to the arts. Serendipity Arts Festival's intensive programme of exhibitions and performances is energised by spaces for social and educational engagement. The Festival is coming back for its ninth edition this year to Panjim, Goa from December 15-22.

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