SAVAC 25th Annual General Meeting

24 February 2022
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM EST
Hosted on Zoom

Agenda

12:00	Introduction to AGM, Natasha Bissonauth and Sunil Gupta	Indu Vashist
12:05	Introduction to Sunil Gupta's Practice	Natasha Bissonauth
12:15	*PRACTICE: Photography, Politics, Queer, Black, Curating, Community, Activism*	Sunil Gupta
1:00	Sunil Gupta Q&A	Natasha Bissonauth
1:15	SAVAC Board Report	Roxanne Fernandes
1:30	Executive Report	Indu Vashist
1:40	Artistic Report	Toleen Touq
1:50	Board Elections	Sophie Sabet

Attendance

1. Indu Vashist
2. Toleen Touq
3. Sophie Sabet
4. Nedda Baba
5. Aaditya Aggarwal
6. Roxanne Fernandes
7. Elham Fatapour
8. Harshill Dhingra
9. Mahshid Rafiei
10. Meera Sethi
11. Oliver Husain
12. Rupali Morzaria
13. Sameen Mahboubi
14. Sanjay Kalyan
15. Sarah Malik
16. Scott Miller Berry
17. Luxshanaa Sebarajah
18. Sujeet Sennik
19. Suvi Bains
20. Venai Raniga
21. Vince Rozario
22. Zinnia Naqvi

Sunil Gupta

Indu introduces AGM, Natasha and Sunil.
Natasha Bissonauth introduces Sunil Gupta.

Sunil Gupta offers artist talk, *PRACTICE: Photography, Politics, Queer, Black, Curating, Community, Activism*. To see a recording of Sunil's talk, click here.

SAVAC Board Report

Presented by Roxanne Fernandes

In the last year the Board focused heavily on SAVAC's new strategic plan.

Strategic Plan

SAVAC's Strategic Plan 2022 - 2025 can be found on the SAVAC website. It was produced in consultation with organization and development consultant Nadia Bello. Former board members Marsya and Saroja assisted as well.

Highlights

- Emphasis in maintaining SAVAC's core mission, continuing to support artists of colour and address sector-wide issues
- Shift in focus to reinvigorate community both locally and abroad
    - Continue to strengthen those bonds inside and outside of canada
- Evaluate who SAVAC's audience is; people are tuning in around the world more and more
- SAVAC is seeking to grow financially in order to support the demands of the world
    - Mental health, changing conditions of the city, maintain steady programming

Key Questions

- How do we make space for ourselves?
- How do we recognize physical labour?
- How do we recognize the times to speak out?
- Who do we engage with?
- What are our relationships?

Key Objectives

1. Reshape SAVAC's relationship to and with the community
2. Secure funding streams to support healthy & sustainable infrastructure
3. Increase governance capacity of the board
4. Review organization and staffing structure

Continuing to Ask…

- How can SAVAC have a meaningful impact in our community?
- What has our role been as an identity-based organization?
- How is our role changing within the social political environmental context?
- How far can we push the envelope of what programming can be?

- How can running an organization be creative and flexible?
- How is SAVAC transitioning back to the workplace after multiple lockdowns?
- How will SAVAC secure funding to achieve initiatives?
- What will SAVAC do to increase funding?

Executive Report

Presented by Indu Vashist

Last year, SAVAC focused on supporting programming, staff, marketing and facilities by taking it slow, by not caving into unrealistic reopening plans, and ensuring ample flexibility for artists during this unpredictable time. The last year required nimbleness and resilience working with all the changing timelines and formats of all of our programs. This was particularly challenging while working with partner organizations who were negotiating the same within their organizations.

Our achievements show organizational planning that prioritised the physical and mental health of all parties involved while not compromising on the integrity of our artistic programming. Our challenges consisted mainly of working remotely and feeling disconnected from one another, our artists and our community.

Current Year

During the current year, we have continued to support our artists by paying higher than the minimum amounts indicated in fee schedules. We have supported our staff by:

- Creating a Mental Health Fund for all staff to access due to difficulty in coping with isolated work conditions and re-integration into the workplace
- Maintaining and increasing the Professional Development Fund for all staff members to access training programs
- Continuing to pay cost of living increases to staff
- We have had unexpected influx of funds with the creation of the Asian Solidarity Fund by Proctor and Gamble and the COVID re-opening grant by the Canada Council for the Arts which topped up our annual operating grant by 20%

Facilities

We hope to have a more clear idea of when it will be safe to return to our private office in the Commons @ 401 this year. Additionally:

- We are in the last year of BMO's commitment of 20K per annum
- All incoming income will be held in a trust account for when the Commons @ 401 Executive Committee deems it possible to make secondary level renovations
- With the aid of the CCA reopening grant, the Common @ 401 will initiate an audit of HVAC systems, to ensure adequate air circulation especially in Common places. We will pool our reopening funds to ensure the best possible options for health and safety

Next Year

Next year, since we have been rating well in recent operating grant competitions, we anticipate receiving similar grant amounts from the OAC and TAC. We are currently in a multi-year granting cycle with our largest funder Canada Council for the Arts which makes up about 60% of our core funding. Additionally, due to years of sound financial management, SAVAC has a healthy administrative reserve and a cushion for cash flow.

- The overall revenue amount during this fiscal year appears to be less than previous years due to the end of a few project and touring grants, as well as BMO's multi-year commitment for the Commons project.

Anti-Oppression Workshops

Indu introduces Sarah Malik, who is developing anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Caste workshops for SAVAC. Sarah Malik presents a quick overview of these workshops.

Workshops will address white supremacy and capitalism and their effects on the kind of work that we do. Politics can be exploited and commodified within the arts community. We are learning to have conversations together in order to strengthen our responses to those dynamics.

We are working with a committee of 4 external reviewers to ensure that we have quality input both in terms of respecting the experiences/histories/identities that we are trying to reflect in the curriculum and in terms of ensuring the quality of the modules.

The goal is to produce a guide that folks who are not able to attend the workshops can use.

5 Modules

1. How our relations and identities affect how we deal with conflict
2. Anti Blackness
3. Anti Indigeneity
4. Anti Casteism
5. Final Module gives us an opportunity to think about those learnings and the somatic practices that we can use all together (knowledge, teachings, somatic practices) to enhance how we resolve conflicts and improve how we work together

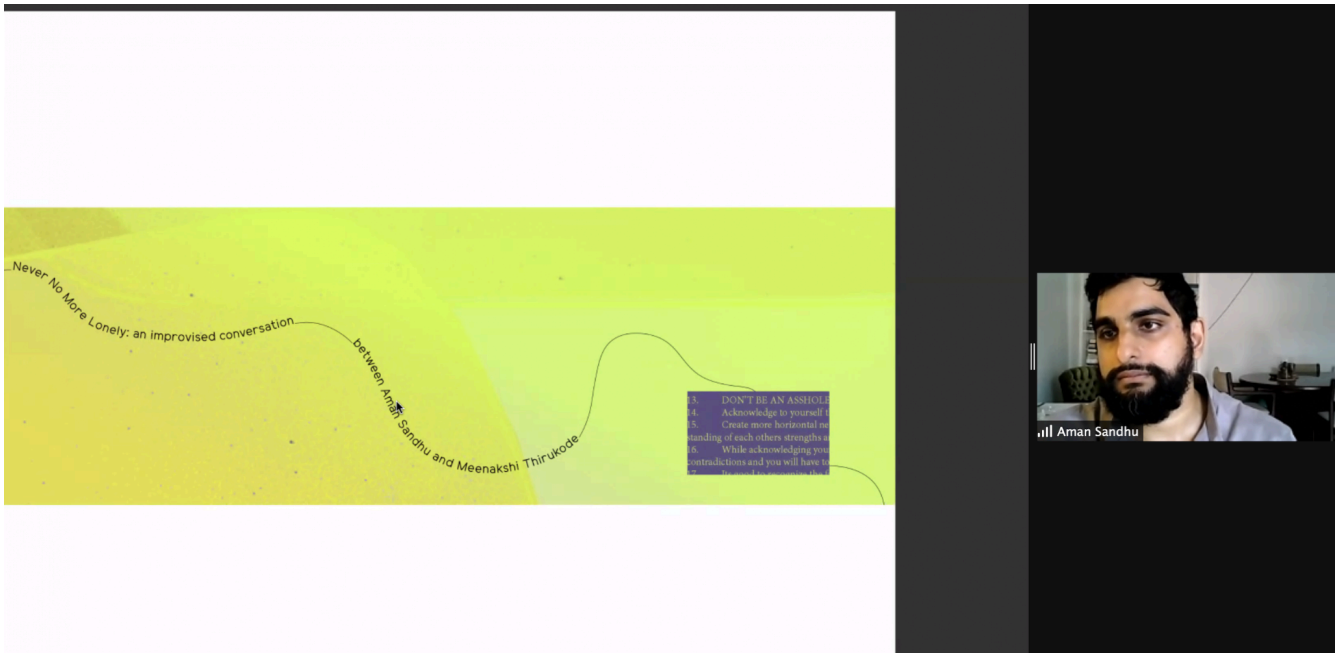
This project is still in the research phase of these workshops which will be offered once this portion is complete.

New Staff

Indu introduces Vince Rozario, Project Coordinator for 25th Anniversary Picnic and Ishtar's International Network of Feral Gardens.

Artistic Report

Presented by Toleen Touq



Never No More Lonely by Aman Sandhu

30 June 2021

Online

Never No More Lonely by Aman Sandhu is a research project looking into improvisation, specifically forms of improvisation found in jazz as a methodology for decentering whiteness in artistic practice, from the studio to pedagogy to institution-making. In this inaugural offering from the project, Aman was in an online conversation with Meenakshi Thirukode (Instituting Otherwise). Guided by an exchange of prompts in the form of images, sounds, and texts, Aman and Meenakshi continued an ongoing conversation about, around and through the scores of feelings elicited from engaging in institutional critique, feminist consciousness raising, imagining critical pedagogies, and refusing hegemony. For the second part of Aman's Missed Connections Residency, a series of crit sessions with Toronto-based emerging artists will be taking place. This is an extension to Aman's initial discussion with Meenakshi Thirukode about his research project.



The opposite of an opposite: a study session convened by Serena Lee

17 November 2021

Online

This public gathering, hosted online and in person (in Vienna), shared glimpses of the ongoing study encounters that map notions of opposites, dualities, dissonance, questioning phenomenological and ideological separations that inform and are reinforced by colonialism/ modernism. *The opposite of an opposite* brought together Serena Lee's study partners and conversations for the first time; involving discussion, participatory somatic activities, and a talk by complementary medicine practitioner, Lynn Teo, who traces dualism within healing practices such as acupuncture and shiatsu.

Study Partners

Alix Eynaudi
Sameer Farooq
Leo Allenda
Giles Bailey
Fan Wu
Aman Sandu
Sanne Oorthuizen
Ruth Jenrbekova



Monitor 14

23 July - 6 August 2021

Online

SAVAC's long-standing short film and video program initiates dialogues around the shifting nature of the politics, economies and landscapes of the Global South through experimental and critical artists' film. MONITOR 14: *Drifting with the Summer Tides* was curated by Rasha Salti. This edition of MONITOR asked the viewer to float and travel towards different realities and lived experiences that the artists and filmmakers find necessary to mediate and communicate. The program articulated along four movements: *Billowing Tide*, *Wave Crest*, *Breaker Tide*, and *Ebbing Wave* and screened on CFMDC's streaming site to audiences across the world.



Still Indian?

20 October 2021 - 19 November 2021

Online

Partnering with Toronto Reel Asian Film Festival and imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival, SAVAC presented a film and conversation program that highlights Ali Kazimi's 1997 film *Shooting Indians: A Journey with Jeffrey Thomas*, originally shown by SAVAC and TRIBE Inc. in 2005 in a program titled *Define Indian*. Kazimi's film came at a time when work about Indigenous and immigrant settler relations pushed the envelope in art and filmmaking on Turtle Island. At one level, Shooting Indians is a portrait of Jeffrey Thomas, an Iroquois photographer. The film explores the influences on his life that led him to his career. It was the work of an American photographer from the turn of the century, Edward Curtis, which forced Thomas to closely examine how Native people had been photographed in the past. The program also included an Online conversation with artists and friends Ali Kazimi and Jeffrey Thomas, moderated by Métis curator Rhéanne Chartrand and Executive Director of SAVAC, Indu Vashist.

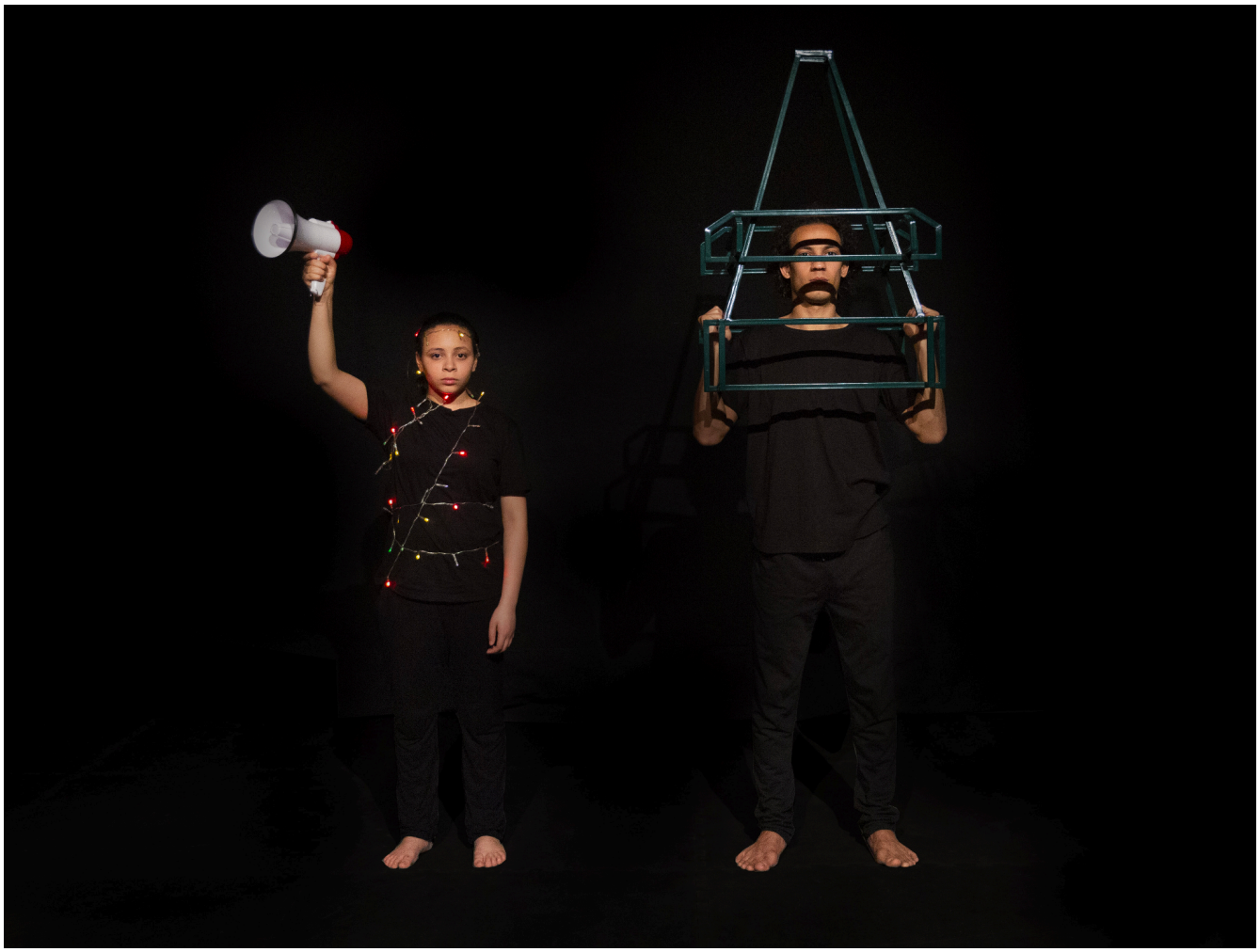


A Minaret for the General’s Wife by Erdem Taşdelen

22 April 2022 - 12 June 2022

Richmond Art Gallery, Richmond, BC

First shown in Toronto at Mercer Union from November 2020 - October 2021, this co-commissioned exhibition between SAVAC and Mercer Union is now touring to Richmond Art Gallery in Richmond, BC. *A Minaret for the General’s Wife* centers around a little-known architectural structure located in a small town called Kėdainiai in Lithuania. Built in 1880 on what is now a public park, and restored in 2007 to its current state, this structure is a free-standing Ottoman-style minaret that peculiarly has no mosque below it. Erdem developed a series of works in video, sound, photography, sculpture, text and found objects that speculate on the multiple narratives surrounding the narrative, and creating a platform where these works can create resonances within the diasporic communities of Toronto.



The Loudspeaker and the Tower by Manar Moursi

28 May - 31 July 2022

Artspace Peterborough, Peterborough, ON

Originally co-produced by SAVAC and Trinity Square Video, the exhibition makes its final stop as part of the three-leg tour at Artspace Peterborough. Using the mosque as its starting point, The Loudspeaker and the Tower examined the apparatus of the minaret as a vertical symbol of power and as a horizontal multiplier of official and unsanctioned narratives in the outskirts of Cairo. The exhibition acknowledges the hybridized function of these contemporary, religious houses, which operate as hacks into the civic infrastructure to secure amenities, community, and sustainability. In staging these elements, the exhibition highlights the material and political significance of new mosque architecture in Egypt today, looking into processes of building and negotiating both the structures themselves and what transpires inside them.



The Medium is the Medium is the Medium by P.Mansaram

22 January 2022 - 20 March 2022

Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey, BC

An exhibition of the works of senior artist Panchal Mansaram, a mixed-media artist whose works and legacy intimately reflect the diasporic experience. For an artist of his generation, Mansaram’s artistic career is extremely experimental and broad; ranging from painting to photography, textiles, xerox art, and video. The Surrey Art Gallery exhibition is the third leg of the tour of P. Mansaram's show, originally shown with and at the Art Museum in Toronto, and then later shown at the Art Gallery of Burlington. As part of related programming, the SAG hosted an online conversation on the Art of P.Mansaram with Deepali Dewan, Indu Vashist, and Toleen Touq, moderated by Sirish Rao



Nothing is lost except nothing at all except what is not had by Nour Bishouty

2 February 2022 - 5 March 2022

Gallery 44, Toronto, ON

This exhibition, Nour Bishouty's first solo show in Toronto, centres on an oil painting made by her late father, Ghassan Bishouty, in Amman in the early 1980s. The artist takes *Al-Wadi*, an orientalist-style painting of a Bedouin landscape in Jordan as a point of departure to explore unregulated systems of mapping and legibility. Nour engages in a process of intentional obscurity with the painting to consider the idea of misunderstanding as a productive lens—intertwining and unfolding objects, images and ways of seeing. Replication, expansion, extrapolation and modification are used as interventions to redirect our lines of inquiry into unchartered horizons. The exhibition also includes a commissioned essay by writer Tammer El-Sheikh, and an online conversation between Nour Bishouty, Monica Basbous, Jumana Manna was hosted by Gallery 44.



Ishtar's International Network of Feral Gardens

May 2022

This multidisciplinary program encourages participants to grow their own food, to create a communal energetic connection, and to think collectively about food sovereignty and seed saving. SAVAC will disperse seeds to participating gardens and provide fees/stipends for equipment, soil, seeds etc. to community members who join the growing Network. For this edition, we plan to conduct more Toronto-based activities such as garden tours to generate solidarity and experience sharing between participants. Similarly to the first edition, we will work on a critical program that highlights the intersections between food, race and labour within the capitalist economy.



Writer-in-Residence: Aaditya Aggarwal

February 2022 – February 2023

Coinciding with our 25th-year anniversary, this program aims to build a meaningful relationship with a writer who is interested in SAVAC's current work as well as history as an organization. This moment asks us to reflect on the current conditions of art criticism and review, given the number of publications that have reduced print runs or shut down entirely. We are also concerned by the lack of writing by people of colour about the work of artists, curators, and/or organizations run by people of colour. For these reasons, we are offering a platform that supports writers both emerging and established to build relationships with us and our community of artists based on collaboration, reciprocity, and generative discourse. For the duration of the residency, the writer in residence will be asked to produce 4 written pieces/projects to be published on various platforms of their choosing about the current programming of SAVAC (2022-2023). Aaditya will be the Guest Editor for the Peripheral Review Digital Chapbook edition published with SAVAC in 2023.

Board Elections

Mahshid Rafiei and Yasmin Aly are stepping off the board. We thank them for their years of service to the Board of Directors.

New Board Candidates

- Elham Fatapour
- Sujeet Sennik
- Sameen Mahboubi
- Harshill Dhingra
- Suvi Bains
- Shalaka Jadhov (absent)

Sophie shares the Google Form Ballot. AGM participants submit their vote for board members. Participants are welcome to vote for as many candidates as they'd like.

Board Elections Results

Sophie presents the results, announcing the following candidates as part of the Board of Directors.

- Sameen Mahboubi
- Suvi Bains
- Shalaka Jadhov

Indu concludes the meeting with a thank you.