PRESS RELEASE: Gender Bender 2020 goes online

Greetings from the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan!

"In the dark times will there also be singing? Yes, there will be singing. About the dark times."
- Bertolt Brecht

Gender Bender, India's first arts festival that focuses on fresh perspectives of gender, is on view from December 4, 2020 @ www.sandboxcollective.org.

Art was meant to bring people together, to assemble, to celebrate. And yet, that is the one thing we have been unable to do this year - get together. But even a global pandemic must not stop us from coming together to experience the transformative power of art, even if we do not come together in a physical space.

In a year filled with lock-downs and travel restrictions, Gender Bender aims at keeping the gender discourse alive in the arts. From comic books to dance and theatre performances, from paintings and installations to films and film montages, the Gender Bender 2020 grantees have gone beyond the call of work to try to realise their projects in these testing times. We will not be together in a physical space but there is nothing to stop us from coming together online to experience and celebrate the work-in-progress version of the artworks.

Gender Bender is a joint project of the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan and Sandbox Collective. The project is conceived, conceptualised, and curated by Sandbox Collective.

Now in its sixth year, Gender Bender is the first festival of its kind in India that showcases new works of art around gender - as a concept, discourse, construct, and as art itself. In providing a trigger grant to artists and individuals creating such work, and showcasing these projects for the audience, the aim is to add to the ever- evolving understanding of gender.

In the last five years, Gender Bender has transformed to more than a festival that showcases the work of its grantees, it has become a recognised space for conversations on gender with artists and audiences alike. The festival has grown from strength to strength over the years; 2020 would have seen us at the Bangalore International Centre if Corona had not struck. Covid-19 changed everything, including the way we see art, gender and humanity. In response, we - and the jury panel - decided to award 15, instead of the usual 10 grants this year. This has been a very difficult year for all of us, and we value and honour the passion and commitment of artists across the world who choose to continue making art in these challenging times.

This year's jury included dancer, writer and pedagogue Ranjana Dave; writer and Professor at St.Joseph's Vijeta Kumar; playwright, director and performer Irawati Karnik; and poet, artist and trans activist Kalki Subramaniam, who deliberated over 200 applications from all over the globe, and finally awarded 15 grants. This year's projects include a film on the Laund Naach of Bihar, another on the short life of a queer artist, a film montage on male empathy, a transatlantic musical conversation, theatre and dance performances, performative and visual arts explorations, comic books, paintings and more.

For further details, visit us or Sandbox Collective online: goethe.de/bangalore; Facebook: @goetheinstitut.bangalore; Twitter: @GI_bangalore; Instagram: @goetheinstitutbangalore; sandboxcollective.org.

May we request you to give wide coverage to this seminal Festival. As we will not be in a physical space to interact with the audiences who would otherwise view the works, we request you to help us reach out to a wider audience with an article in your publication. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to interview any of the artists or jury members. You will find attached details of all the grantees and their works.

For more information, please contact Shiva Pathak: +91 9986243500 or me: +91 9243100911.

Thank you in anticipation for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,