



**GENDER  
BENDER  
2021**

# From Sandbox Collective

For all of us at Sandbox Collective, the last two years continue to defy description. Faced with the challenges thrown at us in the past, a shaky present and an uncertain future, the only thing we are certain of at this point is that we must continue the work, however and whenever possible. These difficult times have only taught us how much more we must persevere to further the gender discourse in the hope of contributing to a better understanding of gender and art. Even as we continue to celebrate in every way we can-now more than ever.

This year we envisaged Gender Bender(GB) as a digital manifestation of the physical festival – an interactive online space for audiences to engage with. Keeping this in mind, we invited applications for only ideas that could be realised in the digital space. We specifically asked for proposals that explored the intersection of art and technology.

In its seventh edition we decided to broaden the scope of our understanding of gender by adding artist and filmmaker Aarathi Parthasarathy and writer and professor Vijeta Kumar to the GB core team. A big round of thanks to both of them for their patience and support. Thanks also go out to Ambika Joshi, Nadika Nadja, Renuka Rajiv, and Swati Bandi-this year's fantastic jury for painstakingly selecting the final 11 grantees. Thanks also to Falana Films for their impeccable documentation of the festival - this is our third edition with them.

Gratitude and thanks to Anokhi Shah and team at IOVR for hand holding us in the digital space and helping GB2021 find a 'real' digital home.

This festival would not be as colourful and fun if it were not for the incredible Studio Ping Pong, we couldn't have asked for a better design team.

GB would not be what it is without its own cohort—thank you Archana Prasad, Nisha Susan, Padmini Ray Murray and Vivek Madan for your unconditional support, help and encouragement.

The stellar team at Sandbox Collective comprising Leya Mammen, Nina Karun, Raabiya Jayaram and Samyuktha Manogaran for being the real force that made this festival a reality.

And, last but not the least our friends and partners at the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan, Bangalore. Claus, Maureen, Nandita and Riya, we couldn't (and won't) ask for better partners. With this edition we also bid adieu to Claus Heimes, and welcome Michael Heinst into the GB family fold.

And, finally our audience, if it weren't for you, there would be none of this. Thank you for the support. And, for the love.  
Shiva and Nimi

# From Goethe-Institut /Max Mueller Bhavan

Dear Friends,

We are proud and honoured to present the seventh edition of Gender Bender, a joint project of Sandbox Collective and the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan, Bangalore.

Since its inception in 2015, the festival has provided a unique space for artistic explorations around questions of gender, sexuality, and identity. In the first five years, the festival took place physically, initially at our institute, then at Bangalore International Centre (BIC). Due to the pandemic, however, Gender Bender moved online in 2020 – and we decided to have another virtual edition of the festival this year.

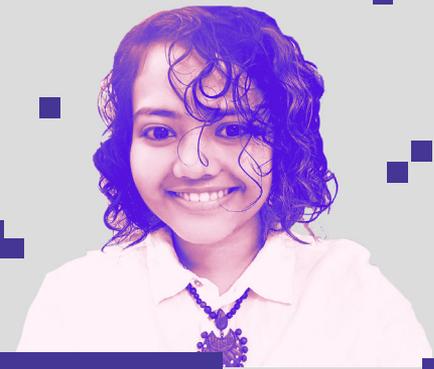
Despite the challenging circumstances, the eleven projects selected by the jury for a Gender Bender grant in 2021 have managed to find very creative and innovative ways to navigate the digital space for the realisation and presentation of their project ideas. Using a variety of media forms and technologies, the grantees have produced a range of inspiring works for the festival that re-examine and re-imagine our notions of gender and gender norms.

I would like to thank Nimi Ravindran and Shiva Pathak and their team at Sandbox Collective, our jury members Nadika Nadja, Swati Bandi, Renuka Rajiv and Ambika Joshi, and all the participating artists for their enthusiasm. And finally, I wish all of us a fantastic Gender Bender festival 2021.

Dr. Michael Heinst  
Director (Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore)

# GRANTEES

2019-2020



Anurati Srivastava: Gurgaon  
**Malika-e-Marzi**  
(Queen of my  
own Volition)

Anurati Srivastava is a playful-learning experience designer and new media artist. Over the past five years, she has designed children's interactive media - including games, digital products, visual narratives and curricula - that promote social-emotional learning and global citizenship education with organizations such as UNESCO, Katha and UNFPA. She has an interdisciplinary academic background in engineering, science and liberal arts. She is an Arts for Good Fellow 2021 and a Young India Fellow 2017.

**Malika-e-Marzi (Queen of my own Volition)** or the princess can save herself, is a platformer interactive game that subverts the trope of platformer games, of the man rescuing the princess or the damsel in distress. The game follows the lives of real-life powerful queens and princesses that have ruled over the Indian subcontinent and narrates their eclectic stories of valour and rebellion, and how they have saved themselves in the face of trials, deviating from the archetype and popular narrative of women under the Mughal empire.

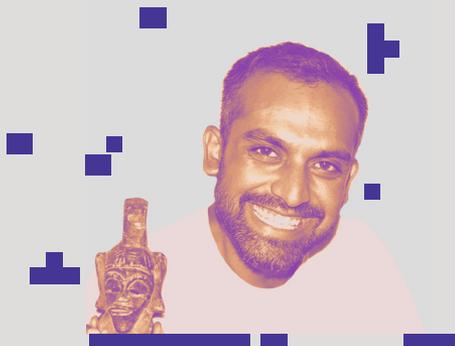
Adil Kalim completed his B.F.A in Art Education and M.F.A. in Graphic Art (Printmaking) from the Jamia Millia Islamia University. His work showcases the issues that he has come across since his childhood. Society's fixation with the cookie cutter model and their distaste for nonconformity has always been a major concern in his artworks. Our obsession with labelling and boxing anyone who is 'different' is at the core of all his work.

**This project aims to portray the unseen beauty of our lives.** This is presented through vivid images layered with text and illustrations on book covers. Books - being a symbol of knowledge, awareness, tolerance, and understanding - will be used to present the idea that a person's life is like a book, that others are yet to read. The project aims to drive home the idea of how similar the lives of queer persons are to the people who reject their very place in society through the use of unacceptable language.

Adil Kalim: New Delhi  
**Untitled**



Dheeraj Kumar is a trained Fashion Designer turned Photo Artist. He has worked in various domestic export houses while simultaneously learning and practicing the craft of photography. He is inspired by personalities such as Frida Kahlo, Robert Mapplethorpe and Henry Moore and aspires to define with the lens, his personal approach towards life, beauty and art. He travels to the sleepy villages of southern India to capture the moods, culture, colours that drew him to this region in the first place. The human form with its many complexities and layers is another quest and a constant source of inspiration.



Dheeraj Kumar: Bihar  
**MAUGA**

This project is envisioned as a photobook. In his own words, **“it took me years to understand myself, though it appears as if society had already decided who I was, even as I was still discovering myself, simply because society doesn’t seem to care for my emotions.”** He hopes this project will offer him and others who feel ‘different’ a new perspective to help celebrate and embrace our uniqueness rather than feel ashamed because there can never be one right way when it comes to Gender.



Johnson Rajkumar is an award-winning documentary filmmaker. His documentary, *Fireflies*, which explored gender dynamics during conflicts and armed violence in Manipur has been featured in several international and national film festivals. He is currently a film conservator and an archivist in the Manipur Film Archive. His interest is exploring collective memories through material and visual culture.

This project is an online video archive of Nupi Manbi, indigenous transgender women of Manipur. The archive is a ruminative visual anthology exploring the Nupi Manbi experience-of their identities-through mnemonic testimony, observational moments, and fragmentary impressions. The testimonies in the project are designed to critique patriarchy by exploring the idea of 'safe spaces' in Manipur.



Johnson Rajkumar: Manipur  
**Eigi Mari (English  
Translation: My  
Story)**



Prerit Jain is a toy and game designer based in Indore. His practice revolves around playfulness and the role of emerging technology as a medium for human connection with oneself and the other.

Prerit Jain: Indore  
**Fancy dress**

Prerit's project tries to provide a space with props centered around gender, for people to connect with their childhood; a space that encourages them to be playful and expressive.

Teresa A Braggs is a Bangalore-based experimental media practitioner and has worked with the media of found text, documentary sound, visuals, and the moving image in prior artistic work.

Teresa's work is an audio-visual exploration of queer sex. Grounded in the practice of experimental media, this project is a study on fucking and the sexual body.



002fa7: Bangalore  
**What's coming?**



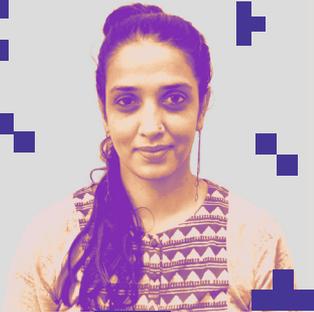
Saad Khan is a PhD candidate in the Dept. of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Washington with an extensive background as a qualitative researcher in the areas of gender, sexual and reproductive health and rights, masculinity, disability, and education. 'Little Boxes' is a self-taught artist and PhD candidate in the Dept. of Social and Political Science at the University of Glasgow, Scotland. They are researching the contestation between decoloniality and digital culture in the queer politics of Bangladesh and West Bengal.



Saad Khan & 'Little Boxes':  
Bangladesh  
**Queer research  
through a digital  
zine and podcast  
series**

The project aims to propogate knowledge and critical conversation on how to conduct queer research (research on queer issues and queer forms of research) in Bangladesh through the creative medium of a digital zine and podcast series with South Asian researchers working at the intersections of art, activism, and academia.





Sharanya Ramprakash: Bangalore  
**#Malashree  
Challenge**

Sharanya Ramprakash is a theatre maker working at the intersection of gender, tradition and language, with a focus on Kannada culture. She writes, acts, directs and collaborates with a range of forms, communities and theatre makers across local, national and international locations. Her work is research-based, collaborative and exploratory. She is interested in the gaps between binaries such as Man-Woman, Urban-Rural, Traditional-Modern, Kannada-English and her work thrives in these in-between spaces.

#MalashreeChallenge is a social experiment on popular mainstream platform MX TakaTak, Josh and Moj. 20 feminists take up the #MalashreeChallenge to co-opt the filmography of Kannada Lady Superstar KanasinaRani Malashree into the trans-feminist narrative. Can Malashree's gender-bending filmography catapult her into an icon for transfeminism in Kannada pop culture? Will the #MalashreeChallenge go viral?

Shraddha Sharma, Sudhamshu Mitra and Yash Jain come from interdisciplinary backgrounds - a teacher and social researcher, a project manager with a liberal arts background, and a coder for a better world. What brings them together is their interest in working towards an equitable world by reflecting on their own privilege and on the invisible ways in which caste operates, and a desire to lay bare their own backyard. Pursuing an M.Phil. in Women's Studies at JNU, project management in a gaming start-up and software development at Yousician are each of their day jobs.

//CasteNoBar

Do we become casteless on dating apps? Or do we reinvent heteronormative brahmanical ways while finding love, sex and everything else? // CasteNoBar is an interactive digital installation based on narratives of how cis het savarnas navigate dating apps.



Shraddha Sharma, Sudhamshu  
Mitra, Yash Jain: Bangalore  
//CasteNoBar

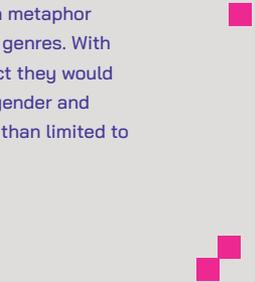


The three-member team represents a collective working between the lines of technology, gender and art over the last two years. Their work is built upon collaboration; where individual ideas and skill sets merge. Twisha works with gender issues through art, publication design and writing; Kabir works with emerging technologies with a focus on AR; while Shagnik is a visual designer and Illustrator who has worked in publication and journalism.



**Twisha Mehta, Kabir Chaturvedi,  
Shagnik Chakraborty:** Bangalore  
**Genre**

Genre is envisaged as an online space for gender discourse. It uses music and its ever-evolving set of genres as a metaphor to introduce ideas of gender as genres. With music at the core of their project they would like to dwell on the premise of gender and sexuality as a spectrum rather than limited to a binary.



Vastavikta Bhagat is an architect, narrative artist, digital archivist and Assistant Professor at the School of Environment and Architecture, Mumbai. She works with drawing out narratives, data, language and archives. Her recent experimentation with code and new forms of archives led to questioning what it means to inhabit digital spaces through their experiential dimensions. The themes of some of her ongoing work also focuses on spatial and environmental politics surrounding post-intensive mining landscapes and climate change in Indian cities.

This project looks at unravelling the dominant socio-cultural narrative consolidated through time where caste and gender biases have put forth a singular identity /idea of an ideal household. Within this exclusionary framework, any form of gender non-conformity and queerness outside the configuration of the ideal family is termed as invalid, which in turn has implications on the visceral experience of inhabiting physical and digital spaces. She proposes that many households beyond the conventional frame are built on gender solidarities and friendships which create alternative imaginations of a home that are unique and based on the spaces and networks we access. She looks at putting together an archive of these experiences and friendships through a series of portraits of homes, experiences of gendered and queer households through collected and found imagery, sound, noise and narrative drawings by mobilising fiction.



**Vastavikta Bhagat: Mumbai,  
A home in  
many pieces  
(An archive of  
household portraits)**

# EVENTS

1980

# Aisa-waisa kuch kyun hota hai saheeli ?

Riddles of gender. Riddled with songs.

With Z J\* TejasAP

Gender in Bollywood oscillates between two states of being: straitjacket and chiffon.

But, given a chance, it really blossoms in a myriad of expressions to our great delight. Over three sessions of radio-style interactions on Zoom (think Vivdh Bharati, ye children of FM radio!), we will sing, watch, hum, and gossip together to celebrate gender expressions in popular Hindi cinema new and old.

Participants will register on zoom, log in and await their turn  
to join the show as participants.

A live show, this will later be available for viewing on instagram.

\*Zoom Jockey. Please don't cancel me.



# Lunar Levitations with Luckamma

Unravelling the future of your love life

The 90s kids had Linda Goodman, 2021 brings us Luckamma, the long-legged lioness. Is your love-life bumbling along, hinged or hanging about, waiting on a Cupid with no kindling in your tinderbox? Love and lust are difficult areas to navigate, and we could all do with a little bit of luck and laughter. So let the OG shewolf, Witch of the Waste, Fortune Teller to the Stars, Fire Eater of Fatehpur Sikri -LuckLookLukamma help you find your true light. At her disposal are crystal balls and coffee cups, fortune cards and eye-shadow.

\*As a feminist crusader she possesses a sharp blade that cuts right through patriarchy and bullshit.

# GB 2021 gift hamper

We've tried to dissolve two years of physical distance with a box of the most fun things made by the most fun folks and curated by the most fun us (even if we say so ourselves!). So there's a special box of goodies that pack in the essence of Gender Bender - a festival we celebrate with much love.

- Besides Love, Laughter and Joy, the kit contains:
- Compassion Cards by Aakash Dhingra
- The Homemaker's Kit by Eeshita Kapadiya
- Curated Spotify Playlists by the Gender Bender Team
- Reading List from the Gender Bender Library
- Notebook by The Aravani Art Project
- Coasters: Set of 4
- Nafs-e-nafees: An exquisite blend for the unique you by Zama and Rafia Zainab
- Fun stickers of the gender disruptor, Cecilia by Indu Antony

Reuse the packaging material that your cat (child/you) can go crazy with  
Enjoy like anything.

## **The #GBRedCarpetChallenge**

Created by performer Rency Philip and friends for the festival. Fun and Masti was assured for all, in addition, some lucky respondents received the Gender Bender 2021 festival kit.

The #GBRedCarpetChallenge involved music, dance, dressing up and a whole load of fun stuff we've always wanted to do but never found the space to.

