

Gender Bender is a joint project of Sandbox Collective
and Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan Bangalore.

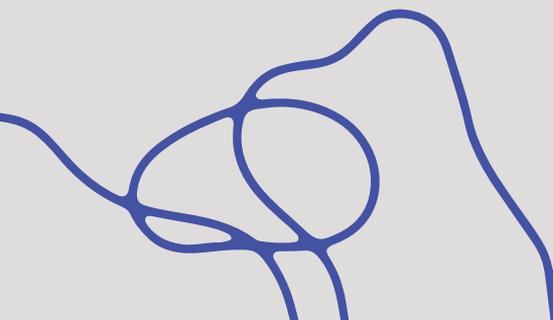
The festival is conceived, conceptualised, and curated by
Sandbox Collective.



BANGALORE
INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE



Consulate General
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Bangalore



From Sandbox Collective

What began as a one off evening of performances and exhibits in 2015 has grown into a much needed space for gender-centric programs and conversations through the arts. Over the last eight years Gender Bender has evolved into an arts festival that has tried to make space for all things gender by curating and programming everything from stand-up comedy, dance, music and literature to panel discussions and technology as part of the festival.

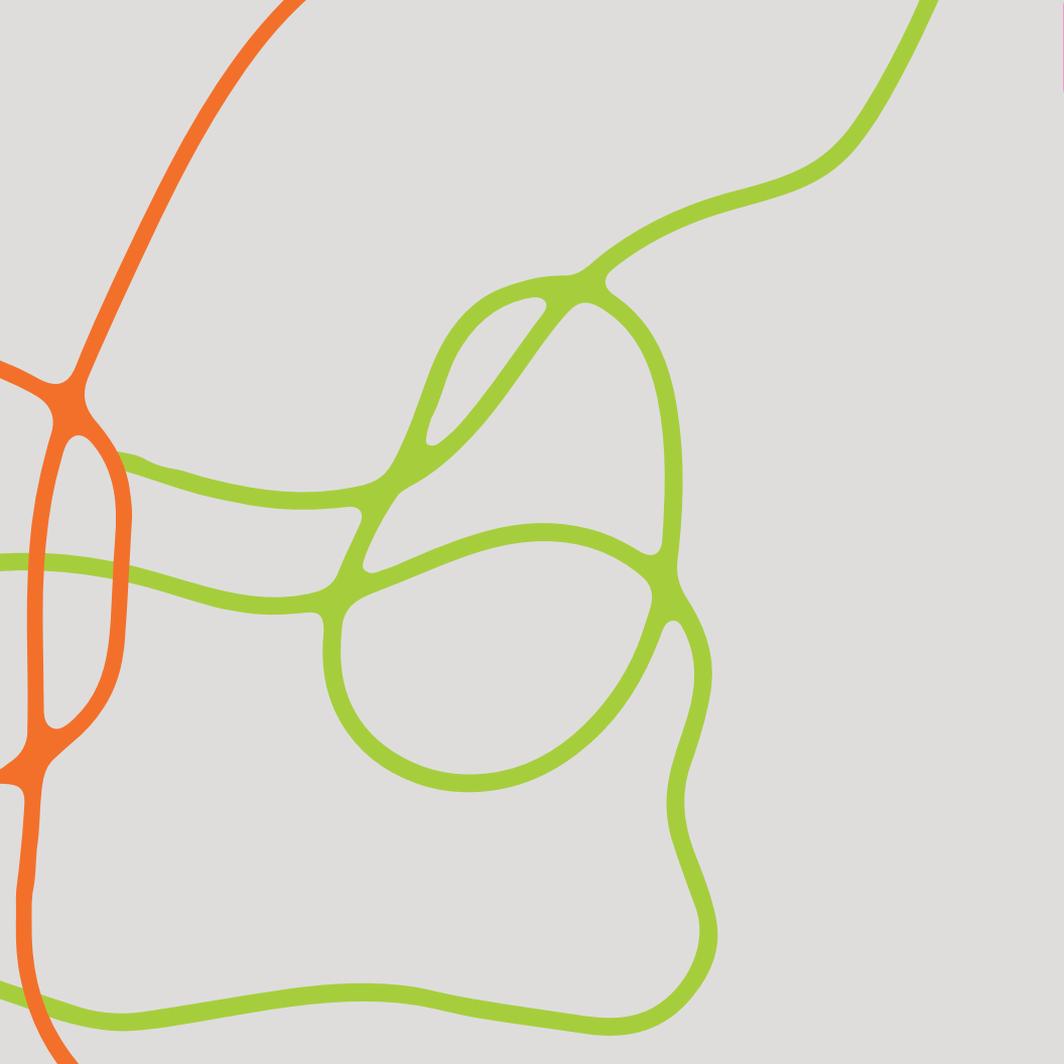
After two years of being restricted to the digital space, it is both a relief and a cause for celebration to be back in a physical space to showcase the works of this year's grantees along with a whole set of very exciting curated events.

Gender Bender has been a constant learning experience, and over the years we have gravitated towards finding new and more inclusive ways to look at feminism as a work in progress rather than a set destination. In recent times we have created a core team comprising fellow artists from diverse backgrounds with the intention of decentralising the decision making process. We have also started taking tiny steps towards creating a more diverse, inclusive and accessible festival with regards to our independent jury, the selection of grantees, as well as programming. In the coming years we intend to find partners and collaborators who will guide and steer us towards these goals.

Gender Bender is yet again, happy to find a nurturing home at the Bangalore International Centre, and as always, we are proud to continue our partnership with the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan, with whom we began this journey in 2015. This year's opening acts have been very kindly supported by the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Needless to say, Gender Bender would not be possible without the help and encouragement of the jury, grantees, friends and supporters from the extended arts community. It is our wish and prayer that we can manifest the 10th edition of Gender Bender as Asia's largest festival bringing together art and gender. And, we know that we can only achieve this with your continued love and support.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.
Team Sandbox Collective



From Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan

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

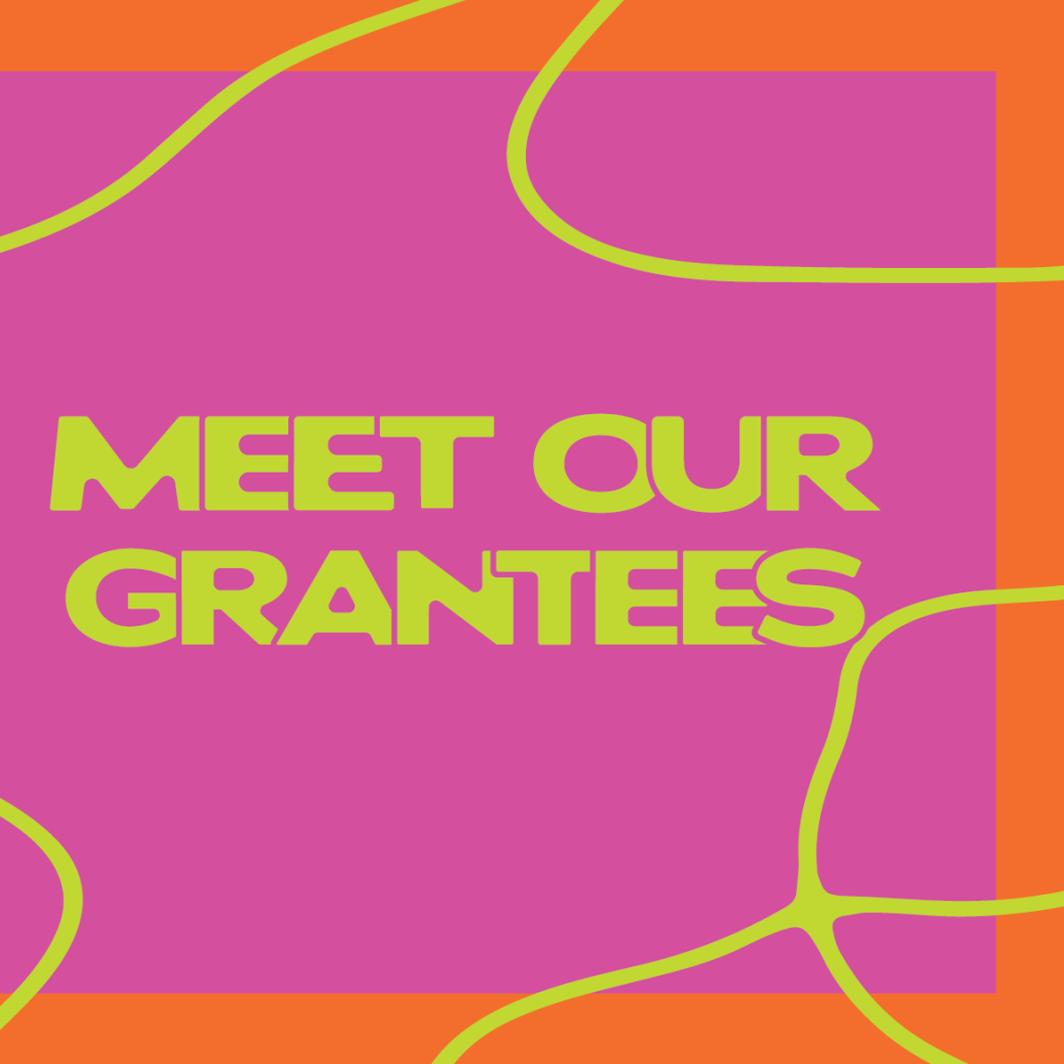
Since its inception in 2015, the festival has provided a unique space for artistic explorations around questions of gender, sexuality, and identity. In the first five years, the festival took place physically. Due to the pandemic, however, Gender Bender had to move online in 2020 and 2021, becoming a successful virtual festival. Nothing compares to personal encounters between artists and audience, however, which is why we are excited that this year's edition is returning to its former venue, the Bangalore International Center.

The artists selected by the jury for a Gender Bender grant in 2022 have managed yet again to find very creative and innovative ways of challenging rigid norms of gender, sexuality and identity – expanding our imagination through games and music, through film and photography, through illustration and writing. Using a variety of art forms and media, the grantees have produced a range of thought-provoking works for the festival that re-examine and re-imagine our notions of gender and gender norms.

As if Gender Bender 2022 wasn't reason enough to celebrate, there's more: Together with the German Consulate Bangalore, we congratulate Nimi Ravindran and Shiva Pathak who received this year's Goethe Medal at a ceremony in Weimar, Germany, for their inspiring work at Sandbox Collective. The Goethe Medal is an official decoration of the Federal Republic of Germany and the foremost award of its foreign cultural policy. It honours public figures who are committed to the freedom of art and its cross-border exchange.

Finally, I would like to thank Nimi, Shiva and their team at Sandbox Collective, the jury members, and all the participating artists for bringing a fantastic Gender Bender festival 2022 to us!

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



MEET OUR GRANTEES

As an artist, Anup strongly believes that the representation of artistic thought and self searching through the art works should be the fundamental context for art making.

"Artists have continued to express their concern through their research and subjective understanding, even though patriarchy continues to be the greatest obstacle. The truth has been denied by the existing patriarchal structure, even though it is impossible to keep such subjects hidden for long. My interest lies in developing the context, observation and visual reference.

Engaging with these, I also negotiate with the other important elements like form, color, body gesture and size of the pictorial space. Sometimes this process occurs spontaneously. Gradually I developed my own language consisting of a validated depiction. As a person unable to fit into this structured loophole, I strongly believe that beauty should emerge from that conflict. Through my art practice I try to raise conflict in hope of acceptance." Anup's work for Gender Bender comprises of paintings and installations.



মেবেলিছেলে (MEYELI CHELE)

Anup Let

New Delhi

Anup Let (he/him) is a process based artist engaging with the politics of body and social gaze. He is particularly interested in sexuality and gender politics of representation, and in researching different tools of representation in visual culture, and performance based dialogue that often deals with the ritualistic aspect of making, and addresses issues like confinement, social exclusion and patriarchy. His practice moves between traditional tools like drawing, painting and performance art and focuses on the relationship of self and material culture in an urban hybrid society. He completed his BFA and MFA in painting from Visva Bharati, Kala Bhavana, Shantiniketan, West Bengal, India.

Joy Stick is a podcast made with love, curiosity and effort: a young people's archive of stories and lived experiences from across Northeast India with a focus on Assam. The Gender Bender showcase will have a segment of the podcast through the audio presentation of 3 young folks from Assam sharing their experiences under a brand new series '*Men, Masculinity and Mental Health*'.

We have Anamitra Bora, a gender nonbinary, queer research scholar and prospective Ph.D. student; Udipto Phukan, a cis het man working at a semi-corporate firm and founding member of a feminist collective; and we have Rituparna, a trans, genderqueer activist, storyteller and library educator.

We explored the subject of men not just as a singular gender binary but how anything of/ by men is considered the norm, resulting in the institutionalization of oppressive capitalist and patriarchal values and merely boxing it into black-and-white "shoulds".

Through these conversations, we want to imagine a world where anything cis-male-ish is NOT considered dominant, binary is NOT considered a default and our bodies don't function through a freeze response in an auto-pilot system, but rather have full agency to practice deep questioning and critiquing of systems while reclamation of their inherent power. Our showcase attempts to understand what it takes for people to be themselves in a deeply patriarchal and cis heteronormative world.

JOY STICK

Jafrin Akhtar

Assam

Jafrin (any pronoun) is a feminist grassroots community organizer living with epilepsy, engrossed in understanding and building narratives on 'personal is political' with a cup of chai. Their work encompasses youth leadership development, community organizing, Menstrual Health Management, Sexual and Reproductive Health, and Climate Politics via her founded venture Spread Love And Peace and the organizations that she has been currently working with called Leading Change Network and Haiyya. They are an eco-erotic neuroqueer polyamorous artist in practice cum social worker and a non-practicing Muslim from a small village in Assam, Balipara. Find them documenting the self-liberation journey on Instagram #BeingJeffu





NOTHING BUT LOVE

Mridul Kanti Goshami

Bangladesh

Mridul (he/they), born in 1989 in Sylhet, Bangladesh uses photography and storytelling to investigate complex social and political challenges. The people in his photographs are all participants. He prefers making artworks with a therapeutic approach, and not about the attractiveness or should not be a representation of the subject, but evoke feelings and reactions in the viewer. He takes inspiration from the people he meets in his everyday life, animals, poetry and music. His works do not reference recognizable form. The results are deconstructed to the extent that meanings shift and multifaceted interpretations are possible.

In Bangladesh, Penal code 377 courting back to 1860 criminalizes sexual behaviours “*against the order of nature*” conceivably homosexual acts. There have been several notable incidents of hate crime involving physical assault including murder. There are more than 70 countries that criminalise same-sex relationships. The death penalty for same-sex relationships is either ‘allowed’, or evidence of its existence occurs, in 11 of these countries. In more than half the world, LGBT people may not be protected from discrimination by workplace law. Most governments deny trans people the right to legally change their name and gender from those that were assigned to them at birth. A quarter of the world’s population believes that being LGBT should be a crime. My work is about the lives and loves that still continue on the margins of modern civilization.



TANDEMONIUM
MRS TAN
Philippines

MRS TAN (she/her) in drag and (they/them) out of drag, Filipino drag and performance artist, is a by-product of the need for political expression, and to make a creative statement. She transcends boundaries that limit the art of drag by elevating the vapid, and normalizing the off-kilter. These binaries are what has created a body of work with solid foundations, but one that is also open to growth.

TANDEMONIUM is a durational performance where I revisited some of my lived experiences as a drag artist doing live streams, how chaotic that world could be and how power is established between audience to performer, producer to consumer, and how it is played.

TANDEMONIUM entertained the requests of the audience members available in the menu board. It also challenged how an artist, in particular, a queer artist, is commodified and taken advantage of.

This project will be the film version of the project I staged online during the Pandemic. And, hoping for restaging of the physical exhibition.



KORO GOCHONGNI

Pranami Rajbangshi

Assam

Pranami Rajbangshi (she/her) is a Masters of Design student in Photography Design at the National Institute of Design, Gandhinagar. She is a queer, indigenous woman from Assam, interested in the politics of gender and identity which is often drawn from her lived experiences. She is intrigued by the visual medium and believes in its impact.

"The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting"

- Milan Kundera

Koro Gochongni (Initial Conversation) is a diary film to rebuild the severed connection between me and my ancestral identity as an indigenous Koch woman. The film is an excuse to construct my lost identity which now remains at a distance perforated with nostalgia and an imagined belongingness. Without any visual memory of my paternal grandmother whom I've never met - I am searching for her through the stories of my father as well as the women of the community who live in a matrilineal society of the Garo hills of Meghalaya.

The project attempts to dive into the nuances of gender and indigeneity and how that impacts the psychology of a young woman as she asserts her identity wiped from her lived experience by powerful structures in history. The formal aspects of the film attempts to supplement the bridge between the lived, imagined and the borrowed; as it navigates through personal and collective memory of the community which had been pushed towards amnesia of their tribal roots.

Our work “*Queering Disability*” started with interviewing a group of disabled queer individuals from different social locations about how they experience, perform, understand and redefine/negate gender in their daily lives. This series aims to delve deep and understand their struggles in areas of employment, living arrangements, relationships, mental health and education to get a comprehensive picture of their gendered experience of disability. Every person involved in the project is queer disabled, from the artists to the interviewees. The process itself will be a part of honouring our gendered and disabled ways of being. The interviews will be conducted in the communication format(s) the interviewee is comfortable with. The expression of the project is through visual art - digital illustrations and photographs, mediums the artists are most comfortable with.



QUEERING DISABILITY
**Revival
Disability**
Haryana

Revival Disability (they/them) India is a queer disabled collective in India for disabled folks by disabled folks exploring disabled queerness, pleasure and intersectional desire.

The team includes Nu (they/them), a queer disabled non-binary person, the founder of UN recognized Revival Disability India - Magazine and Community and a Laadli UN Award recipient; Sumedha Gupta, a queer disabled photographer; Ritika, a queer autistic artist/illustrator and Rhea Laskar, a queer disabled person who likes to express themselves through poetry and semi-abstract art.



Rishabh Shetty

Karnataka

Rishabh Shetty (they/them) is a 21 year old, born and brought up in Pune currently pursuing their Bachelors in Fine Arts in Srishti, Bangalore. They are an aspiring game designer who enjoys horror RPGs, traveling, cooking and playing the keyboard.

The core concept of the game focuses on the way queer individuals use online spaces especially online gaming communities as safe havens to achieve community and find happiness as the real world may be too hostile for them to do the same safely.



PIGEONS AND PEARLS

Shehzor

Telangana

Shehzor (ae/aem) is a cat and a rapper-poet from Hyderabad. With a focus on the Dakhni language, aer work seeks to locate queerness, joy, and poetry at every turn of spoken and performed expression. Ae have written, recorded, and produced 13 songs in the past three years, all of which are available on aer Youtube channel "Shehzor".

My larger project is Pigeons and Pearls, a concept album, experimenting with the genre of short story anthology in hip hop. It is in the Dakhni language, and explores various Hyderabadis at different turns in their lives.

At the Gender Bender 2022 exhibition, I will be showcasing a music video for the single "Shehzor.flac", and performing songs from the album itself. The single is a pre-album exclusive release, and won't be part of the final album. Gender Bender 2022 will see the premiere screening of the music video, made mainly in collaboration with Maahir Mohiuddin, Vignesh Umesh, and Noahin John. It is currently in the post-production stage.

I will also be performing two or more singles from the album itself, with an introduction to the narrative and themes of each.

Yaatri gan Kripya dhyan dein!

Agyatpuram ki taraf jaane waali train '*Trans-Kamala Express*' platform no 2024 par jald hi aane waali hai.

Passengers please pay attention! The train to Agyatpuram, '*Trans-Kamala Express*' is soon going to arrive at platform No. 2024."

Oh you too have come! Yes, please join me. Hum tho kab se baithe huye hain yahan pe. Sorry, angrezi mein- I have been waiting over here god knows since when. This mardoot train doesn't arrive only. What train are you here for? Trans-Twitter express? Or Trans-hot-shot-start-up express? Ki Trans-licchavi express?

Arre, I know all the trains that pass through this station, haan! You see, waiting is like second skin to me- there is so much you absorb while waiting! Have you also waited for something for a long time- not knowing when to abandon that wait? weight? When to just be? or when to just run away from it all and do something else altogether- may be as a distraction? May be as a life-long thing?

Who knows? Sab ka apna kissa hai...Everyone has a story to tell...nahin ji?

So come! and don't worry, this will not be a heavy dard bhari daastan - some meetha dard only. Come!



A WAIT

Swaja / Saransh

New Delhi

Swaja / Saransh (they/them) likes to play with avatars. They are a filmmaker, researcher and performer and have been invested in ideas of climate change, gender and identities for eleven years now. An avatar that is close to their heart is Avatari Devi, someone who helps them reimagine launda naach- a performance style indigenous to their home state Bihar. While their films have been nominated and won at national and international film festivals, none of them are in their mother tongue- Bhojpuri or the creole of English, Hindi and Bhojpuri they find heartily interesting. They are thankful that the nachaniya and nautanki that Avatari is almost agrees with the world, for their parents often warned them against it. Anyhau, Sab mila ke, they are curious and forever hoping to gain nine lives.



The Bitter Feminists

Karnataka

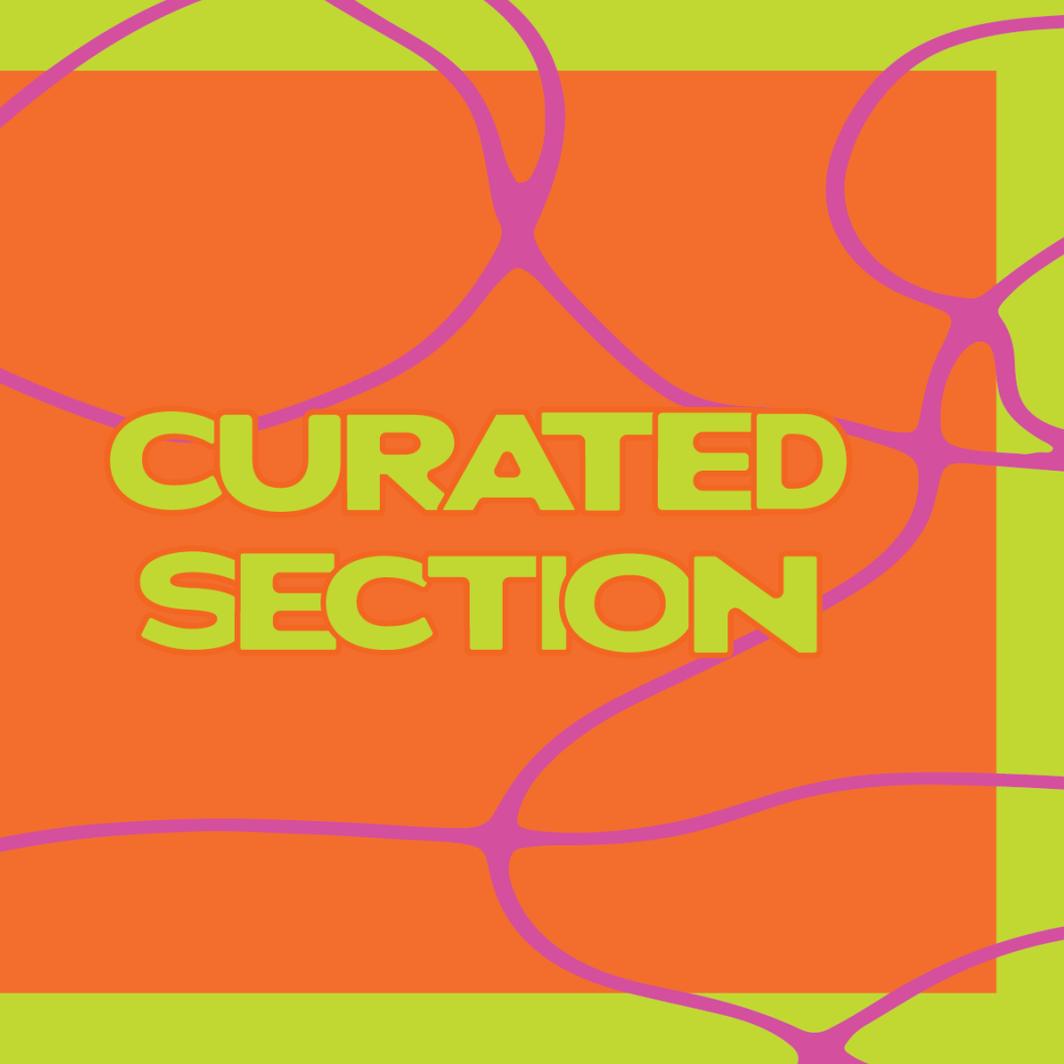
Apurupa and Tejaswi (they/she) are queer, neurodivergent platonic partners of historically-marginalized genders. They are The Bitter Feminists, employing emotions and personal narratives instead of theory and random sampling to delve into the praxis of feminism.

The idea is to record a series of podcasts in response to rigidity of gender roles, their systematisation through cultural and legal systems, their effects on normalizing violence in various aspects of our lives - public as well as personal.

We will be talking about these topics while referencing ongoing media & pop culture narratives, tropes, and the dominance of the white/Savarna cis-het-male gaze in their production.

We intend to dip into our personal experiences to make our commentary relatable, instead of preachy. Personal and intimate, instead of stoic and theoretical.

We intend to produce "5 episodes, which will be accompanied by a curation of digital art, found object media, and excerpts of social media commentary."



**CURATED
SECTION**

PERFORMANCES

Where did she go?

by The Aahvaan Project

A musical journey through poetry, movement and storytelling



SACHIN

BALA

VEDI

PAKHI

The Aahvaan Project was founded in 2016 based on the nirgun philosophy of love and the works of sufi poets and saints. Through a unique combination of storytelling and music, Aahvaan aims to create a space for conversations around the relevance of love in today's times.

PERFORMANCES

Karaoke with Chutney Mary

An evening of karaoke featuring songs by women and queer artists.

Chutney Mary does it all—the gay way. She DJ's vogue music, queers up rap hits, sings the blues, performs stand up comedy, hosts queer events and dances better than any sexy aunty you've been drooling over. She is unabashedly gay (of course) and is a performance powerhouse. Chutney Mary is the alter ego of interdisciplinary artist Avril Stormy Unger.



PERFORMANCES

Your life in a song with Muqталif



SHREYAS
VISHWAROOP

APARUPA GUPTA

DHIRAJ BANNERJEA

Muqталif will explore songs of love and longing from various genres, ghazals as well as jazz and blues..

Muqталif comprises three musicians Aparupa Gupta, Shreyas Vishwaroop and Dhiraj Bannerjjea whose attempt it is to clean the dust off the old diary and feel the now yellowed pages and smell the air that once was new.

Closing party

featuring Disco Puppet, Pardafash and Fushi

Gender Bender 2022 closes with three amazing Bangalore-based musicians who will play specially curated sets for Gender Bender. Sing, Dance and shine on..... The new year is almost upon us.



FUSHI

Fushi (pronounced fah-shie), is a Bangalore based enby selector. Although Fushi listens to a wide range of music, they enjoy playing Afrobeat, Baile, Breakbeat, Jungle, Dub and DnB the most.



PARDAFASH

Playing under the moniker Pardafash, Sandhya Visvanathan is a multi-disciplinary artist who works in the fields of electronic music and design. She is a vocalist, composer, producer and DJ. Her artistic focus is on the intersection of dance music, protest songs and narratives.



DISCO
PUPPET

Disco Puppet's sound is characterised by its irreverence towards the stylistic and procedural dictates of genres and their purists. This stems partly from ideology, but mostly from a tendency to get easily bored.

INSTALLATIONS/EXHIBITIONS

The Gender Bender Library

curated by
Amulya Shruthi

How about a library YOU lend to?



Our crowd-sourced library features the works of women/queer writers and artists.

There's poetry, prose, novels, essays, plays, even zines and comics. Works that you might find in every bookstore and library in the country, but also works that you might never find in a mainstream bookstore or library. This installation is a reflection of the reading/collecting choices of individuals and organisations who have contributed to this library.

The Gender Bender library is a place to read and reflect, discuss and debate, it is a space for books and banter.

Amulya Shruthi has two first names and goes by the pronouns she/her/they/them. She has been a writer, a poet, an artist, a cat-lady, and an all-round creative type. Amulya has the audacity to put together a library despite barely having read a book through the pandemic. She loves and lives in Bangalore.

STUDENT PROJECTS

Shared Readings

Poetry and Prose. Celebratory and Radical. Scholastic and Erotic.

The students of Mount Carmel College share their favourites from the Gender Bender Library.

Cuss me pretty

An art project by the students of Mount Carmel College that attempts to claim the very words/slurs and curses that have historically been used to humiliate or insult women. To take power away from the abuser by reclaiming, owning and wearing the cuss words with pride.

Coordinator: Amulya Shruthi.

Team: Hita, Rolie, Nandini, Shamika, Meenakshi, Swastika, Cheryl, Meghnavi and Shivika

Falana Fotowale

A professional photo studio put together especially for Gender Bender, where you can get your individual/family portrait taken, in any gender-bending way you want.

Walk in, choose your costumes, accessories, glam up and pose for posterity! 1 Hour Development guaranteed!

Falana Films is a women-led creative film and animation studio based in Bangalore.

Karaoke Bar

If you're travelling at the speed of light, we wanna make a supersonic woman of you.

Come and sing the songs that set your soul ablaze.

You can be Freddy Mercury, Beyonce and Billie Eilish or anyone that you want to be.

Sing along, because we have a specially curated list of evergreens for you.

INSTALLATIONS/EXHIBITIONS

Neon Art

by Indu Anthony



This neon text piece is an invitation to enter a space that is private, intimate, and complex. It's a question and an answer, all woven into the advert-like display. The work sits in the larger practice of sexuality and its expressions from spaces of violence, self-harm, complex relations, and hierarchies where the question of consent is not just a matter of spoken words. Those who ask, do they seek answers? Where is the answer? Does it matter? And you, my dear audience, do you have a question for me? What would you like me to say tonight? Do I even dare to say, yes? Even more so, do I dare to say, no?

TALK

Unpacking My Library

A talk by Vijeta kumar on books that changed her life.

Vijeta Kumar is a Bangalore based writer. She teaches Communicative English at St. Joseph's University.

Can Activism Kill You? Activism fatigue, and how to rise and shine each day

Whether you've been an activist for years, or a newly minted fresher, activism fatigue can be real. A talk on how to prevent burnout, stay motivated and ahead of the curve and live to fight another day.

A conversation with writer, (re) searcher, filmmaker / activist Madhu Bhushan and musician / theatre practitioner / activist Rumi Harish. Moderated by Aarti Mundkur (Lawyer).



WORKSHOP

The Edys and the Edas: A Writing Workshop

by Vijeta Kumar

Covering memory, comedy, parody, and other Edys and Edas in *Bending Gender*, this four-hour writing workshop will show you how to use memory to sustain writing, and to undo battles of the body to free the mind. We will discuss, write, read each other's work and give feedback.



WORKSHOP

Bollywood Dhamaka with Shruti Kulkarni

Who can resist the lure of Bollywood, the jhatkas and the matkas?



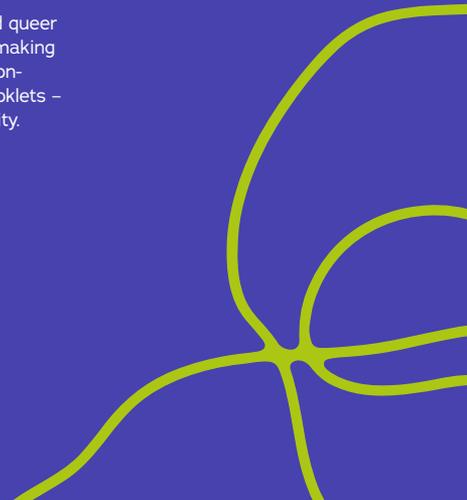
A versatile dancer, Shruti has a diploma in movement arts, and has trained in many forms including belly dance, kathak and contemporary dance for a decade, but her first love has always been bollywood. Come and (re) discover bollywood.

WORKSHOP

Gender At Play: Zine Making Workshop by Zinedabaad

Cut, paste, doodle and reimagine gender as we collaborate, play, dissent and find our voice and expression through the creation of zines.

Zinedabaad is a collective run by brown women and queer folk committed to creating safe and inclusive zine-making spaces. They celebrate the DIY culture of zines – non-commercial, small-circulation and self-published booklets – that encourage people to find solidarity in community.



Meet our Jury Members Gender Bender

A round of thanks and appreciation for our jury members for their time, effort and investment in selecting the grantees for this year. Their contribution is invaluable.



Abhishek Anicca is a writer, poet and performer. He identifies as a person with locomotor disability and chronic illness which shapes his creative endeavours.



Sabika Abbas is a performance poet and founder of Sar-e-Rahguzar: Poetry on the streets. She is the co-editor of the Bystander Anthology and Senior Editor of the SAAG Anthology. Her work revolves around gender and minority rights, art-based advocacy, and inclusive curriculum design.



Siddhesh Gautam is a Delhi based multi-discipline, mixed-media artist, designer, treasure hunter, fallen angel, soul searcher and an Ambedkarite.



Sarover Zaidi is a philosopher and a social anthropologist working at the intersections of critical theory, anthropology, art, architecture and material culture studies.

The background is a solid orange color. It is decorated with several thick, hand-drawn blue lines that meander across the page. Some lines form loops, while others are more linear and wavy. The lines vary in thickness and have a slightly irregular, organic feel.

20 GB 22