



REVIEW ARTICLE

ARTISTS AND ART PRACTICES IN THE RECENT PAST: A MICROSCOPIC VIEW

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic hit – first in China in December 2019, then spreading rapidly to other countries in the early months of 2020 –the health care systems and economics of nations across the world were quickly overcome. The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools, institutions and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world's student population. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies have significantly disturbed traditional educational practices. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to pave the way for introducing digital learning. These concern areas were varied for artists in different fields. For example, architects and dancers were more likely to be affected by loss of studio space, while filmmakers were more likely to suffer from lack of access to international markets and festivals. Dancers were also more likely than other artists to report being significantly or critically affected financially (87.5%, compared to 47% for visual artists). All activities have changed from daily routines to art exhibitions. Art exhibitions are a series of activities, the endpoint of the art process. Art-making is an activity that can still be carried out when social restrictions are imposed since it is an individual activity at the studio, usually at home studio. At every career level (emerging, mid-career, established), about 30% of artists said they are concerned about the ongoing personal financial implications of COVID-19.

INTRODUCTION

Since the announcement of social restrictions' status due to the outbreak of corona, suddenly, all social interactions and physical activities must change. It starts from social restrictions to self-quarantine. Until finally on, social media appear hashtags #stayathome. Almost all activities outside the home have stopped, from schools, offices, art exhibitions, performances, and many others. Activities are transferred through the house and rely on digital communication technology or commonly known as the internet. The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools, institutions and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world's student population. The impact of COVID-19 on arts residencies is expected to affect some aspects of arts residencies more than others. Respondents anticipate a significant or critical impact to events and projects (66%), professional development (61%), and motivation and inspiration (50%). Four types of home-based arts engagement were identified during the COVID-19 pandemic: digital arts and writing, musical activities, crafts, and reading for pleasure.

Our results show that the strongest predictors of the engagement were age, education attainment, social support, and emotion-focused or supportive coping styles. In particular, younger adults (aged 18–29), non-key workers, people with greater social support, people who had lost work, those who were worried about catching the virus, and those with an emotion-focused, problem-focused or supportive coping style were more likely to have increased arts engagement during lockdown. Arts activities were used as approach and avoidance strategies to help cope with emotions, as well as to help improve self-development. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies have significantly disturbed traditional educational practices. Reopening of schools after relaxation of restriction is another challenge with many new standard operating procedures put in place. Within a short span of the COVID-19 pandemic, many researchers have shared their works on teaching and learning in different ways. Several schools, colleges and universities have discontinued face-to-face teachings. There is a fear of losing the 2020 academic year or even more in the coming future. The need of the hour is to innovate and implement alternative educational systems and assessment strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to pave the way for introducing digital learning.



Pandemic situation (painted by Lavanya Rawal)

Indian Artists and Galleries Respond to Covid-19

Nightmare: The best way the art world can help is by funding oxygen supplies and medical care, said people on the ground in India. India recorded over 400,000 new COVID-19 cases for the second day in a row on Sunday. The death toll rose by 3,523, taking the country's total to 211,853. The New York Times reports that actual deaths could exceed these official numbers by two to five times. London and Delhi-based artist Himali Singh Soin is directing donations to an organisation called Live to Love, which works with communities in the Himalayas as part of her static range project in collaboration with Serpentine Gallery and We Present. Donations will be matched by the project's sponsor, We Transfer, until 30 June. The theme of communication was especially prevalent – artists are desperate for residency providers to be transparent and communicate regularly about their plans for residencies, resuming activity, and other relevant information. Responses indicate that clear communication would help artists feel supported and inspired, enthusiastic and secure about future opportunities, and involved in discussions about the future of residencies post-COVID.

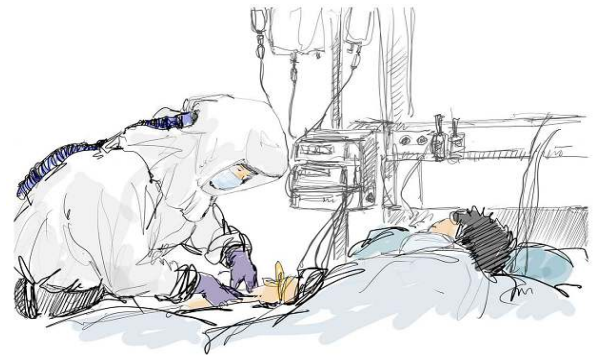


Emission Test, painted by N.S. Harsha

N.S. Harsha gives us a manner of painting, which has to be read rather than viewed. The present suite of works renders Harsha's views of the contemporary moment with deep compassion and a searing irony. This is the image of our time: rows upon rows of people being given the RT PCR test, the tools of their occupation borne with both humour and vulnerability.

EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT SUPPORT: As far as government aid is concerned, just 17% of artist respondents said they have been able to access emergency funding support in their region. Many respondents alluded to their residency or migratory status as making them ineligible for government aid in the countries where they are working.

Other freelancers and self-employed artists indicated that they are also ineligible for government support in some locations.



Critical Covid patient

Artistes raise fund for Covid relief: DAG makes record sales for their Covid initiative while eminent artists Bharti Kher and Subodh Gupta put together a fundraiser of their recent works. The week-long DAG Fundraiser Sale that was held recently in May saw 51 artworks from their own collection being put up for sale, which sold out in record time and raised funds to the tune of Rs 1 crore for the cause of Covid relief in India. The online sale saw works that "spanned different periods, movements, genres and mediums and were critically evaluated for their quality, with the price bands ranging from Rs 50,000 to Rs 5 lakh". The prices were also significantly reduced to encourage buyers as all the proceeds from the fundraiser were split between three organisations working to ease India's struggle with the pandemic — Sood Charity Foundation, Hemkunt Foundation and Khalsa Aid India.

POSSIBILITIES FOR VIRTUAL RESIDENCIES: The majority of artist respondents agree that some logistical and interpersonal aspects of arts residencies could take place online, such as networking, professional development, and community engagement. Just over 30% of respondents say fully virtual residencies could take place; however, 40% say that residencies are all about in-person exchange, and that virtual options would not be possible. Just 25% say that the creation of new artworks could happen virtually. The contradiction in these responses suggests that virtual residencies and digital residency activity cannot replace in-person exchange, but can be complementary.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

While respondents listed finances as an affected area, most say it is too early to tell the financial implications. 12.6% of respondents have been affected by non-refundable residency fees and airfares, and many drew attention to the postponement or cancellation of artist fees or stipends.

Artists listed a range of lost financial opportunities, including:

- Cancelled speaking engagements, exhibitions, and workshops
- Cancelled or delayed payments
- Missing out on opportunities to sell artwork
- Cancellation fees for deciding not to pursue residency due to COVID-19

- Increased expenses to remain in residencies when returning home was not safe
- Non-refundable residency-related travel expenses

CONCLUSION

The first survey has provided a broad picture of the immediate effects of the COVID19 pandemic on artist residencies, focusing primarily on the cancellations and modifications of programmes already in-progress. While there is clearly the notable immediate impact of residency cancellations and loss of income and opportunities for both artists and organisations, the findings reveal a significant amount of uncertainty among both groups about their future operations. Internet-based art exhibition organisers are not fully aware that they are mediating producers. Instead of preparing itself so that this internet-based exhibition can become a medium for communicating artworks, it is just filling the moment at home. Consumers are accustomed to using media that suits their needs and is easy.

When an online exhibition is held, we do not realise how each media has a different character from an electronic catalogue in the form of softcopy. Art exhibitions are not new, they have even been carried out since before the internet appeared, but the activity of visiting exhibitions has lagged far behind, not much adapting to the emerging new media. Finally, it must be realised that internet-based exhibitions do not reach an audience as broad as space and time, which has no boundaries on the internet.

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