2020
BAGRI FOUNDATION
YEAR IN REVIEW

“It has been an incredible year of change on our 30th anniversary. With two major exhibitions, multiple new digital initiatives, a film festival and international projects. We are very grateful to our partners and contributors for working with us in this unique year!”

- Alka Bagri, Trustee

Painted and gilded clay figure of Kali striding over Shiva, Bengal, Eastern India, late 19th century. © The Trustees of the British Museum
**Tantra: enlightenment to revolution** at the British Museum opened on 24 September and is the first major exhibition in the UK focusing on the history of Tantra, a set of beliefs and rituals that first emerged in India around AD 500.

It features over 100 objects, including masterpieces of sculpture, painting, prints and ritual objects and covers Tantra’s early medieval transformation of Hinduism and Buddhism, its links to the Indian fight for independence and the rise of 1960s counterculture in the West. The exhibition continues until 24 January 2021 dependent on government guidelines.

**PROJECTS SUPPORTED**

Bagri Foundation was headline sponsor for the London Indian Film Festival for our sixth year running, launching in June.

In its 11th edition, the team were able to bring the festival online in a new digital initiative #LoveLIFFatHome. It included 13 feature films and 17 short films in 12 languages, alongside a series of conversations and Q&As. LIFF also returned to the cinema in September with UK premieres over four days at BFI Southbank and Ciné Lumière.

Shezad Dawood’s Bagri Foundation supported projects ‘Encroachments’ toured to New Art Exchange, Nottingham and ‘University of Non-Dualism’ toured to the Dhaka Art Summit in February and March, reaching over 500,000 people.

‘Encroachments’ took an oblique look at the relations between Pakistan and the US since partition in 1947 through a new Virtual Reality (VR) environment, whilst ‘University’ presented a series of collaborations which took its starting point from the work of Muzharul Islam, a modernist architect, urban planner, educator and activist hailing from Bangladesh.

On 11 March, Bagri Foundation and Shorts on Tap presented the final event in the two-year series Tales of The Silk Road. Focussing on the country of Jordan, the evening featured two live poetry readings by Amir Darwish and Farrah Akbik, and seven short films followed by a Q&A.

From 5-7 March, Aakash Odedra Company and Bagri Foundation presented Samsara in its World premiere at the Asia TOPA Festival in Melbourne, Australia. Soon after, the pandemic swept across the world, postponing the world tour until 2021. We look forward to presenting the piece across China, Europe and the UK next year.

Bagri Foundation was a main sponsor for the first ever UK Jashn-e-Rekhta festival delivered virtually through 32 sessions from 5-6 September.

JeR is the largest Urdu festival in the world, and presents renowned Urdu poets, singers, dancers, filmmakers, authors, storytellers and more. This year included specially curated events featuring Javed Akhtar, Manoj Muntashir, Azra Raza, Yawar Abbas, Raza Ali Abidi, Pervaiz Alam, Sania Saeed Tanuja Chandra, Nasreen Munni Kabir, Tina Sani and Shilpa Rao.

**From Here to Eternity: A Sunil Gupta Retrospective** at The Photographer’s Gallery, opened on 9 October and is curated by our partners at Autograph.

This exhibition marks the first major retrospective of the India-born, UK-based photographer and spans five decades of his work. Subversive, impulsive, personal and political, it presents a timely reflection and overview of his socially engaged work and ongoing issues such as identity, family, race, migration and sexuality. The exhibition continues until 24 February 2021 dependent on government guidelines.

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On 23 June, Bagri Foundation supported the first in a series of three podcasts for the renowned 99% Invisible. 99pi explores the unnoticed architecture and design that shapes our world.

The first episode, titled “Return of the Yokai” produced by Vivian Le, explored the development of mascots throughout Japanese history. Looking at Amabie, one of many “yokai,” or spirits, from Japanese folklore which have echoed to the present day pop culture.

Between 29 October and 29 November, Bagri Foundation supported a digital exhibition, performances, reading sessions, workshops, live conversations, audio broadcasts, and screenings by the collective Asia-Art-Activism. Entitled Til We Meet Again, IRL, Best Wishes the events were curated by Annie Jael Kwan, Arianna Mercado Cuong Pham and Howl Yuan. It featured over 40 artists, who were asked to consider how we might arise together through recent global anxieties due to the pandemic, worldwide political and civil unrest, especially within the context of ‘Asia’.

The Bagri Foundation continues to support the Gandhara Connections project delivered by the Classical Art Research Centre at the University of Oxford. It pools knowledge and stimulates new insights into Gandharan art and its links to Greece and Rome. In September, they published The Global Connections of Gandharan Art with postponed lectures to take place in 2021.

The Bagri Foundation partnered with Untold, and The British Council to support a new project called Write Afghanistan.

Write Afghanistan develops the craft of Afghan women writers, connects them with each other and amplifies these less-heard voices by platforming their stories internationally. In November, we shared their profiles and excerpts from new writing, and four of them had their works published in Words Without Borders in December.

In April, the Bagri Foundation released our first Open Call for a project entitled At Home in the World. Inspired by Vietnamese philosopher and Buddhist Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, five artists were chosen to create new digital commissions for five categories as outlined below.


Inspired by abstract tantric painting from Rajasthan, Malay poetry and the artists’ own notion of identity and mixed heritage, ‘hot B stars’ is a collection of 4 miniature cinemagraphs providing fragments of memory at a time of self-isolation.

Noel Ed De Leon – Microcosmic Orbit - 17 July/ 14 August / 18 September - Category: Lectures & Courses

Curated by Eva Bentcheva, the series transformed De Leon’s attic into a “microcosmic orbit” of exchange about diaspora, migration, and archiving. In collaboration with artists Pepe Dayaw and Erika Tan, and cultural anthropologist Tran Thu Trang.

View ‘Sheltering’
View ‘Wrapping’
View ‘Temporalities’
Our multimedia interview series **30 Artists, 30 Years** celebrates the Bagri Foundation’s 30th anniversary supporting extraordinary Asian talent and inspiring arts programmes. Throughout the year, we shared profiles of visual artists, musicians, performers, academics, journalists, writers and storytellers who we have been privileged to work with. We revisited their work, current endeavours and future plans.

Between **April and June 2020**, we launched six episodes of **Ghazal ki kahaani, Meri Zubaani** (The Story of the Ghazal, in My Words). It invites viewers to join legendary singer Radhika Chopra on an intimate journey of discovery through the art of the Ghazal. This is a rare online opportunity to be led by her astonishing voice in this form of Urdu poetry. All episodes are still available to watch on our [YouTube page](https://www.youtube.com).

**Open Up: Artists in the Studio**, launching from **June** to **October**, is a digital interview series with artists asking probing questions that explore what drives them, inspires them, terrifies them; and ultimately what is most important to them. Especially during these turbulent times.

2020 Interviewees: Shezad Dawood, Charwei Tsai, Timur Si-Qin, Leeloo Chan, Sahej Rahal, Boedi Widjaja, Harminder Judge, Rhine Bernardino. All interviews are still available to watch on our [YouTube page](https://www.youtube.com).

**The Bottom Drawer: Writers on Inspiration** between **July** – **October 2020**. It consists of a series of online interviews with an array of writers from across Asia and the diaspora discussing what’s inspired them and their early works, at the bottom of the drawer.

2020 Contributors: Zahra Hankir, Pavana Reddy, SS Haque, Sharlene Teo, Nguyen Phan Que Mai, Deepa Anappara, Sarah Shaffi, Anjali Joseph, Katy Carr, Intan Paramaditha, Anna Temby, Will Harris, Nina Mingya Powles. All interviews are still available to watch on our [YouTube page](https://www.youtube.com).

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**WSABI Fox – Loops for Bedroom Dancers** - 7/14/22 September - Category: Sound

A 3-part movement video series exploring the personal, physical, and political meanings of intimate and communal movement. In collaboration with dancers Jennae Santos, Zoë Laureta, Ashton Muñiz, Elizabeth Ibarra, Dee Dee Dame, Marielle Young, Kate Victor, Christine Kazanchian, Jessica Ray, Jazz Goldman and Caressa Casasos.

**Eiko Soga – Ainu Hunter, Mon-chan** - 12 October - 30 November - Category: Film.

Soga’s film explores an idea of ecology of empathy between human and non-human worlds presenting an ethnographic video essay which includes an oral history from a member of the Ainu community, Mon-chan (Atsushi).

**Shagufta Iqbal – Loving Lonely, a Conversation** - 1 / 31 July - Category: Written Word.

Shagufta Iqbal’s poems and moving image work discusses the triumphs and difficulties of motherhood, single-parenting, and how care, solidarity and love are created in spaces where survival is often the overwhelming focus. She was joined by Bridget Hart of Burning Eye Books for a Q&A on **19 August**.
Presented between **15 September - 27 October** was our new digital series, **Object, Story, Wonder: Museum Collections Revealed**.

This series invites curators from museums across the world to share stories about works from their Asian collections. The films can be seen at the links below:

- **British Museum - Tantric Objects with Dr Imma Ramos**
- **Brooklyn Museum - Fierce and Demonic Imagery with Joan Cummins**
- **Ashmolean Museum - Clay Sculpture from India with Dr Mallica Kumbera Landrus**
- **British Library - South Asian natural history paintings with Dr Malini Roy**
- **Royal Collection Trust - Nature in Japanese Art with Rachel Peat and Queen Victoria and the Royal Women of India with Emily Hannam**
- **Aga Khan Museum - The Emperor’s Collections with Dr Marika Sardar**

Asian Countries and Diasporas represented in 2020: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Korea, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, The Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Vietnam.

In 2020, the Bagri Foundation supported 318 creatives and reached audiences of nearly 1.5 million.


**PICTURE CREDITS:**

1. Tantra: enlightenment to revolution at The British Museum. Photo: Bagri Foundation.
2. From Here to Eternity: A Sunil Gupta Retrospective at The Photographer’s Gallery. Photo: Bagri Foundation
5. Aakash Odedra and Hu Shenyuan in Samsara, Asia TOPA Festival. 6. Amorakau, one of the central kami in the Shinto faith (detail).