

MAP ACADEMY



# Annual Report

2024-2025



The MAP Academy's aim is to make South Asia's art and cultural histories more accessible, based on the idea that doing so can have a positive social impact through broadening perspectives on humanity, heritage, and culture.

We are a team of researchers, editors, writers, and creatives united by a shared goal to build more equitable resources on art for the general public.

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## Foreword

The past is an ongoing project. In the context of the many art and cultural histories of South Asia, this past is both a space for new ideas and old debates. Yet, even today, there exist limited ways to engage with it beyond the walls of museums and universities. The MAP Academy was founded three years ago on a simple belief: that art and cultural histories from South Asia merit greater consideration and access. We are driven by the idea that facilitating a deeper and more pluralistic public relationship with these histories is a social good, and we work to build comprehensive, inclusive, and free online resources for people to meaningfully connect with them. In everything we do, we ask: What does it mean to nurture an openness and curiosity for this expansive cultural past? And how can we do this in an equitable and responsible way?

These are not questions with easy or direct answers. The past year has been one of growth and transformation for our organisation, as we've made considered evaluations on how to best serve our increasingly diverse community of readers, learners, and collaborators. My role as the new Director of the MAP Academy has involved reaffirming our commitment to our founding principle, and the finding ways to build a bigger tent for more perspectives and approaches towards our goals.

In 2024-25, the MAP Academy continued to grow our offerings, partnerships, and audience. People are engaging with our resources at a notably larger scale—with over a million website visitors, particularly to our Encyclopedia of Art, and sizable increments to our Course enrolments and completions, live event participants, newsletter subscribers, and social media followers. In terms of our content, our Encyclopedia has seen additions in the areas of Modern & Contemporary Art and Craft & Design, with a regional focus beyond India. This, along with the writing published on our blog, *Tangents*, has continued to support a growing range of publishing partnerships with outlets including *Deccan Herald*, *Dainik Jagran*, *Hindustan Times*, *ThePrint*, *Selvedge Magazine*, *Asia Research News*, *Smarthistory*, *Photoworks UK*, *Garland Magazine*, and more. Our Learning program now includes regular, monthly live talks from our expanding community of scholars, experts, and practitioners, and our first in-person workshop on Modern & Contemporary Art, held in December 2024 at our partner institution, the Museum of Art & Photography (MAP), Bengaluru.

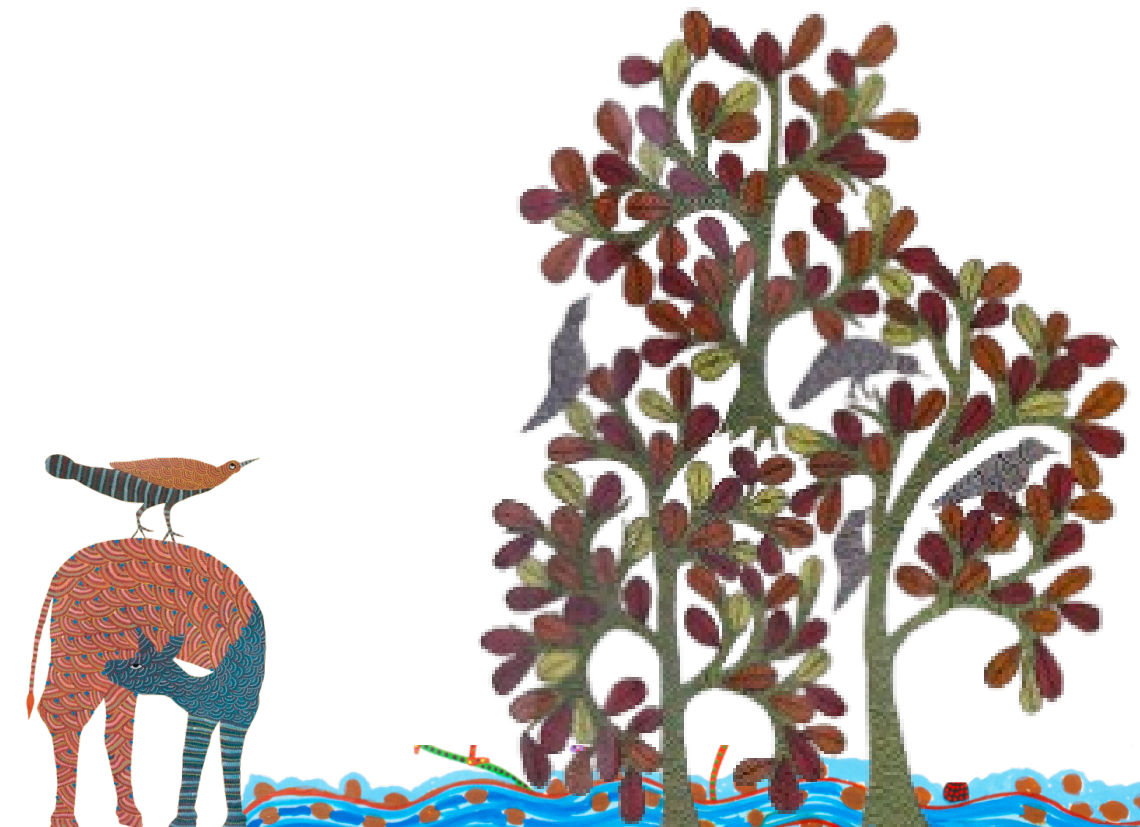
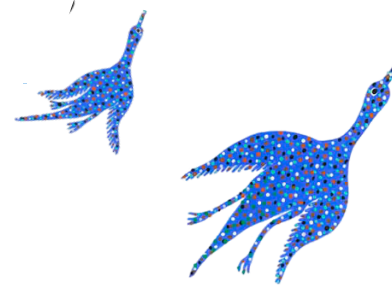
Expanding the scope of our partnerships, we also pursued several collaborative special projects. This included developing a resource-sharing

partnership with the South Asia Decorative Arts and Crafts Collection Trust (SADACC) in the UK and the scholarly network Nowruzgan in Iran; and administering a research and publishing grant to the writer and historian Anirudh Kanisetti, as well as two textile research fellowships in collaboration with Nalli Silks. We ended the year on a high, with the curation and production of an expansive new exhibition and publication on the history of textile tickets in India, in collaboration with the MAP. These textile tickets (one of which appears on the cover of this report) are entry points into a larger history and stand as testaments to how images shape perception, assign value, and construct desire—a story as relevant today as it was over a century ago.

We know that the art and cultural histories of South Asia are not monolithic, and neither are the people that engage with them. This annual report marks our efforts and successes in addressing this heterogeneity over the past year—and signals our ambitions for the next. If the past is an ongoing project, then our work too remains underway.

**Varun Nayar**

Director  
MAP Academy





# Our Highlights



Nowruzgan Partnership



Selvedge Magazine Partnership



MA Live: Bhuri Bai's Life as an Artist



MAP Academy Offsite in Bengaluru



MA Live: Sustainability in Textiles



Encyclopedia Collaboration: Vernacular Furniture of North-west India



Grant & Publication: *Lords of Earth & Sea* by Anirudh Kanisetti



MA Live: Reimagining Tamil Theatre Tradition



MA Live: Behind the Chennai Photo Biennale



Exhibition & Publication: *Ticket Tika Chaap* (with MAP)

APR '24    MAY '24    JUN '24    JUL '24    AUG '24    SEP '24    OCT '24    NOV '24    DEC '24    JAN '25    FEB '25    MAR '25

MA Live: Textiles of Dongria Kondh Community



MAP Academy + Nalli Fellowships



New Director: Varun Nayar



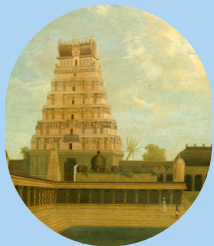
MA Live: Dance and Textiles



Workshop: Interpreting Contemporary Art



MA Live: Revisiting the Chola Empire





# Our Growth



## Audience

563K <sup>↑ 47%</sup>  
Website Users

43K <sup>↑ 126%</sup>  
Social Media Followers

1800 <sup>↑ 40%</sup>  
Course Enrolments



7500 <sup>↑ 43%</sup>  
Newsletter Subscribers

900 <sup>↑ 400%</sup>  
Event Participants

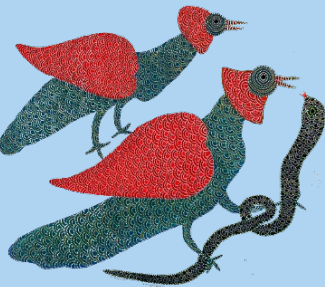


## Engagement

1.1M <sup>↑ 32%</sup>  
Website Page Views

9.3M <sup>↑ 126%</sup>  
Video Engagements

268K <sup>↑ 47%</sup>  
Social Media Engagements



650 <sup>↑ 96%</sup>  
Course Completions

89  
Externally  
Syndicated Articles

7M  
Externally  
Syndicated Reach



# Our Offerings

## COURSES

Enabling online learning for South Asian art history in the global context, including through structured, introductory lessons designed in a self-paced format, live talks and lectures, and a growing library of animated explainer videos on a variety of subjects.

### 3 Courses

32 Lessons  
72 Topics

### 27 Explainer Videos

3 videos released

### 9 Learning Sessions

7 MA Live  
2 Workshops

## TANGENTS

Bringing together a diversity of editorial perspectives that critique, highlight, contest, and reframe ideas through longform essays and deep-dives—all sourced from a growing pool of contributors within and beyond the region.

### 96 Essays

9 essays written

### 37 essays syndicated

15 essays published

### 20 special features

17 published

## ENCYCLOPEDIA

Covering explanations of techniques and materials, thematic essays on historical trends and profiles of artists and institutions. This resource draws from the sensibilities of traditional encyclopedic conventions while adapting to the digital medium and its possibilities.

### 2500 Entries

144 entries edited

### 100K Words

28K words written

### 7200 Images

800 images added

### 3000 cross-references

1000 new references

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

Developing partnerships with organizations and scholars that expand our research practice and resource pool, including through grants and fellowships, collaborative exhibitions and publications, and specialized interactive content including image-based stories and timelines.

### 9 Special Projects

4 projects started

### 8 Collaborative Outcomes

3 new outcomes  
5 outcomes in progress

### 29 Partners

4 new partnerships



ARCHITECTURE



CRAFT & DESIGN



LIVING TRADITIONS



MODERN &  
CONTEMPORARY ART



PHOTOGRAPHY



PRE-MODERN ART



TEXTILES



# Courses

## CORE COURSES

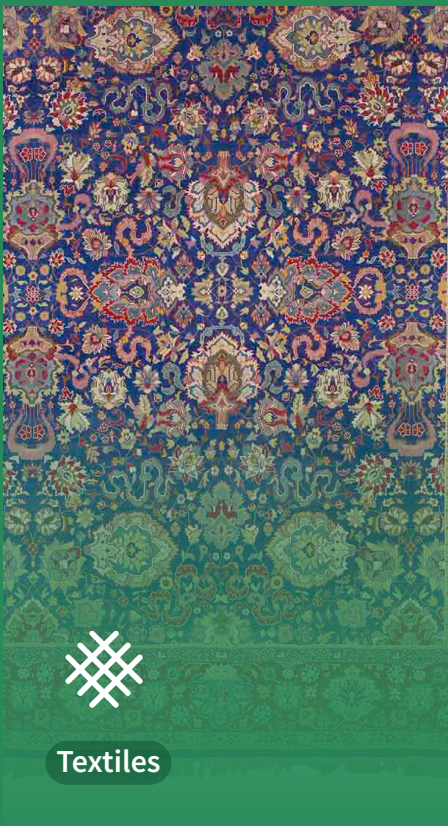
Our Core Courses are the heart of our learning programme—designed by our team of editors and video producers, in collaboration with scholars and subject experts, and for the general learner. They contain technical, thematic, and case-study-based materials supported by hundreds of artworks and engaging video animations. This year, we grew our community of thousands of learners, and began work on two new courses on *Photography* and *Modern Architecture*.



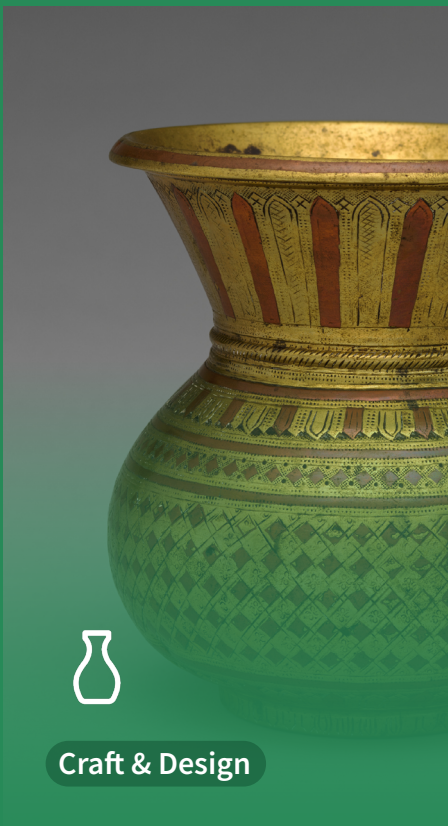
Sign up for  
our Core Courses



Modern &  
Contemporary Art



Textiles



Craft & Design

## EXPLAINER VIDEOS

In response to the popularity of the video content in our Core Courses, we’ve begun developing Explainer Videos that cover a range of themes related to art and cultural history and communicate important ideas in an engaging and accessible way—particularly for new learners who prefer shorter forms of content.



Watch our  
Explainer Videos



Self-Portrait, 1949  
FN Souza, Oil on board, 180.34 x 90.17 cm  
Asia Society Museum, New York





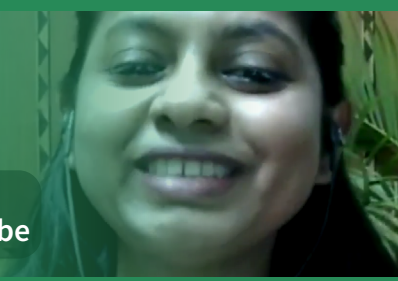
# MA LIVE

This year, we also grew and developed our efforts with online live talks—called MA Live—into a monthly series featuring presentations from our wide network of scholars, researchers, and practitioners. This offers our audience a way to not simply engage with art historical ideas and histories but also hear from figures actively working with them.



Watch our  
MA Live Recordings

Pankaja Sethi  
Textiles of the  
Dongria Kondh Tribe



Varun Gupta  
Behind the Chennai  
Photo Biennale



Namrata Bhutoria  
Sustainability  
in Textiles



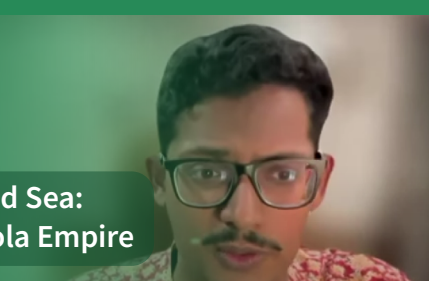
Briana Blasko  
Dance of the Weave: Photographing  
Textiles in Indian Dance



Hanne M. de Bruin  
Kattaikkuttu: Reimagining a  
Tamil Theatre Tradition

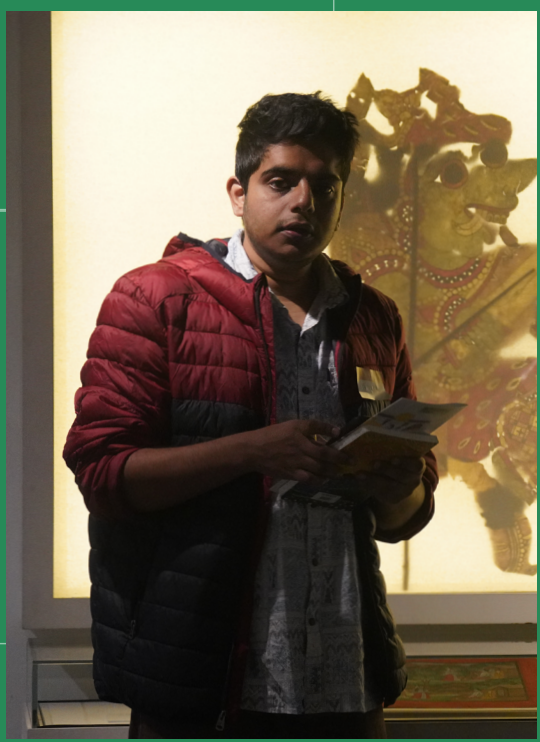


Anirudh Kanisetti  
Lords of Earth and Sea:  
Revisiting the Chola Empire



# WORKSHOPS

In December 2024, we hosted our first-ever physical Workshop at the Museum of Art & Photography, Bengaluru, adapting one of our most popular courses, *Modern & Contemporary Indian Art*, authored by Dr Beth Citron, into two engaging half-day sessions featuring presentations, group exercises, and quizzes. In response to the positive feedback from our attendees, we will be conducting more Workshops in the coming year.



Participants at the workshop:  
‘Interpreting Contemporary Art’  
during the Art is Life Festival at MAP,  
30 November & 1 December 2024



# Encyclopedia of Art

This year, the Encyclopedia continued to widen both the regional and subject scope of our existing database of content. We made a concerted effort to move beyond the contemporary boundaries of India to produce entries on artists, institutions, premodern and modern architecture, and craft and design traditions from across South Asia.

It was also a year of reflection and reorganisation. We restructured our editorial processes, hired subject-specific editors, and brought on new contributors and partners.



Explore our Encyclopedia



Ahmad Shah's Tomb



Kira



Rashid Rana



Chaubandi & Daura



Kushan Wrestlers



Betel Bags

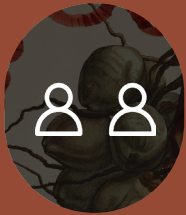


Afghan Box Camera



Tipu's Huma Bird

Every Encyclopedia entry includes careful work from writers, researchers, editors, and image specialists. Our team follows a six-step editorial process, which forms the backbone of our content and ensures its quality and accuracy.



## DISCUSSION & PLANNING

Editors discuss new articles, drawing on published research to expand the breadth of subjects we cover.

## RESEARCH & WRITING

Researchers and writers work on these new articles and submit a draft with a research document outlining their sources.

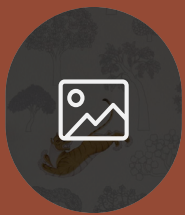


## EDITING & REVIEW

Drafts are edited for structure, clarity, and factual accuracy. This is where we check sources, tighten language, and question biases—keeping the general reader in mind.

## ILLUSTRATION

Images and visuals are sourced, vetted, and added to better illustrate written content, drawing from open-access databases, institutions, artists, and estates.



## PUBLICATION

Articles are published online with headings, links to other articles and definitions, images, captions, and a detailed bibliography.

## FEEDBACK

Articles are updated periodically to reflect feedback from readers, new developments, and emerging research.



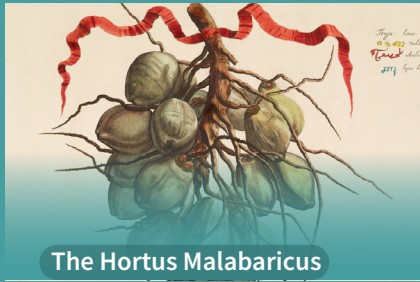


# Tangents

Growing out of the Encyclopedia, Tangents is a new editorial blog featuring commissioned pieces exploring different aspects of art history across the region. Inviting a wide range of contributors from across regions and fields—and with nearly a hundred essays published so far—Tangents cultivates fresh perspectives on art and visual culture from the region. It has also allowed us to establish enduring relationships with our publishing partners—including *Deccan Herald*, *Dainik Jagran*, *Smarthistory*, *Photoworks UK*, *The Print*, and more—who syndicate our work and help share it with a wider audience.



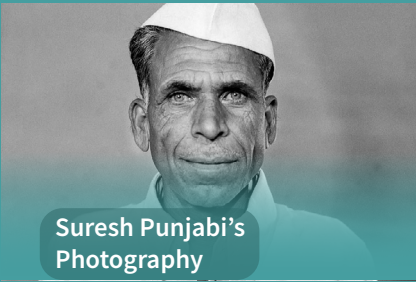
Read our Tangents



The Hortus Malabaricus



Kodak Advertisements in India



Suresh Punjabi's Photography



Weaving Traditions in Songs



Opium and the Orient



Van Vechten's Photos of Ram Gopal



A Temple Restoration Misadventure




A 16th-Century Portuguese Atlas



Understanding Adivasi Artists


STORIES

### The Business of Dreams: Photographs from the Studio of Suresh Punjabi



Varun Nayar

Thought to be dead, an aggrieved Urdu poet arrives at his own memorial service and renounces a world that saw no value in his work. In the dramatic encounter that drives the final act of Guru Dutt's cult classic *Pyasa* (1957), it's the author who declares himself dead, plagued by an undeniably human tension in which a sturdy reality impedes a desire for transcendence. On screen, light and shadow become characters in their own right, and faces concealed by partial darkness register a deeper emotional conflict between an actual and an imagined life. As audiences, we get only a silhouette — the corporeal surface under which a potent energy brims, rendering our assumptions, allegiances and judgements imperfect.




वर्षा का रस आनंद




वर्षा का रस आनंद

वर्षा का रस आनंद

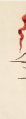
Stories




#### Desires, Reactions, Interpretations: Murals and Inscriptions from Sigiriya



Sarthak Sharma



#### Hortus Malabaricus — How the Garden of Malabar Travelled the World



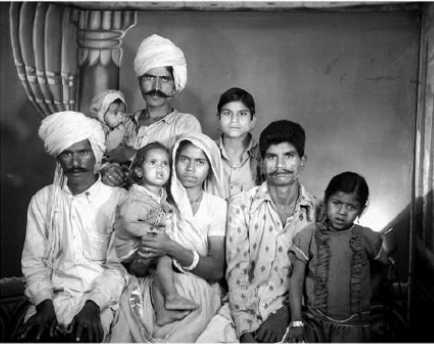
Rachna Shetty

ThePrint

Book Excerpts


### The business of dreams — photographs from the studio of Suresh Punjabi

MAP ACADEMY 23 June, 2024 09:15 am IST




STORIES

### Distilling Rain in Three Acts: Paint, Dance, Bottle



Chandrica Barua

Monsoons in India herald a host of moods, emotions, and idiosyncratic practices — from consuming masala chai and *pakoda* (fried vegetable fritters) to dancing Bollywood-style in the rain to relishing the unique smell of the rains hitting the soil. As an ode to this multi-sensorial season, this article explores three visual, embodied and affective experiences of rain in the socio-cultural history of India.



Screenshots and clippings of Tangents essays published on the MAP Academy website and external publications

18

19



# Special Projects

This year saw the development of another new vertical, Special Projects, through which we undertake collaborative, research-focused initiatives that demonstrate our core values and commitment towards sharing more inclusive and equitable art and cultural histories. This past year, the Special Projects team administrated a grant and two fellowships, developed two publications, curated an exhibition, and rethought our approach to multimedia formats. These projects include:



Curating the exhibition *Ticket Tika Chaap* in collaboration with the Museum of Art & Photography, Bengaluru. This exhibition tells the story of Indian textile tickets in the late 19th and early 20th centuries—and is accompanied by a publication we produced with Niyogi Books.



Reimagining our multimedia *Timelines* project to encompass a growing collection of chronological journeys exploring South Asian art and cultural history in an interdisciplinary manner. This new format will launch in 2025 and include explorations of Pre-Modern Material Culture, Art in the Chola Empire, Bollywood Ephemera, and more.



Awarding the first year of the MAP Academy + Nalli Fellowships, designed to support researchers and educators working on projects that generate greater interest in underrepresented textile practices in South Asia.



Supporting the research and writing of the historian Anirudh Kanisetti through an individual grant, resulting in the publication of *Lords of Earth And Sea: A History of The Chola Empire* (2025), in collaboration with Juggernaut Books.

## Ticket Tika Chaap in collaboration with MAP

*Ticket Tika Chaap : The Art of the Trademark in Indo-British Textile Trade* explores and contextualises the ‘textile ticket’ as a cultural and art historical artefact of the late-19th and early-20th centuries to provide the visitor with a window into the worlds of colonial trade, early advertisement, the textile industry, and the politics of image-making.

Supported by



The MAP Academy team, led by our Research Director and in collaboration with MAP, curated this exhibition with around 300 tickets, along with photographs, paintings and printed ephemera. They also played a major part in the editorial and design of the overall exhibition and the book of the same name published by Niyogi books.



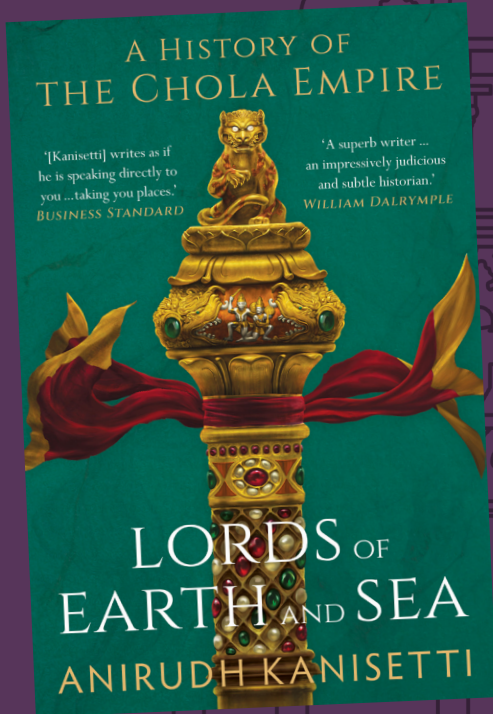
*Ticket Tika Chaap: photos from the exhibition and an article excerpt from the Wallpaper magazine*



## Travel and Research Grant to Anirudh Kanisetti

The new book, *Lords of the Earth and Sea: A History of the Chola Empire* by Anirudh Kanisetti is the first single-volume account to examine the dynasty through transregional and transdisciplinary lenses within narrative history. The MAP Academy’s grant supported the author’s research and travel through nearly

30 temples across Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Odisha to study the architecture, inscriptions, and scholarly material of the period. We also commissioned illustrators Aurelia Frederick and Anupam Arunachalam to create the architectural drawings accompanying the text.



## MAP Academy + Nalli Fellowships

The MAP Academy + Nalli Fellowships support South Asia-based projects that generate new interest in the region’s textile practices among diverse audiences. In the first year of the Fellowship, MAP Academy selected a Research Fellow and an Educator Fellow after an open call and in consultation with an advisory committee from across the field.

### The Fellows



**Anna-Louise Meynell**, our research fellow, will document the textile traditions of the Singpho community in Arunachal Pradesh.



**Pawan Jain**, our educator fellow, will research and develop a comprehensive curriculum on the history of Odisha’s textiles.

### The Advisory Committee

Mayank Mansingh Kaul, researcher and curator  
Manju Sara Rajan, Co-founder, KAASH  
Annapurna Garimella, Art Historian  
Lavanya Nalli, Vice Chairperson, Nalli Silks  
Mandara Vishwanath, Head of Collections, Museum of Art & Photography

Supported by





# Outreach and Marketing

Our outreach and marketing approach best utilises the strengths of each media channel to make our curated and rigorously researched content accessible to a cross section of audiences. We do this in a few different ways:



Our digital marketing and advertising campaigns allowed us a consolidated reach of more than 11 million accounts, with over 15 million impressions on Meta and Google, as well as print and digital advertisements in various publications. We also ran a three-month advertisement in collaboration with *Hindustan Times* that featured art history quizzes.



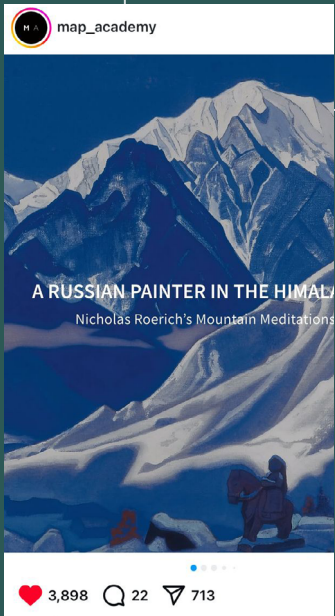
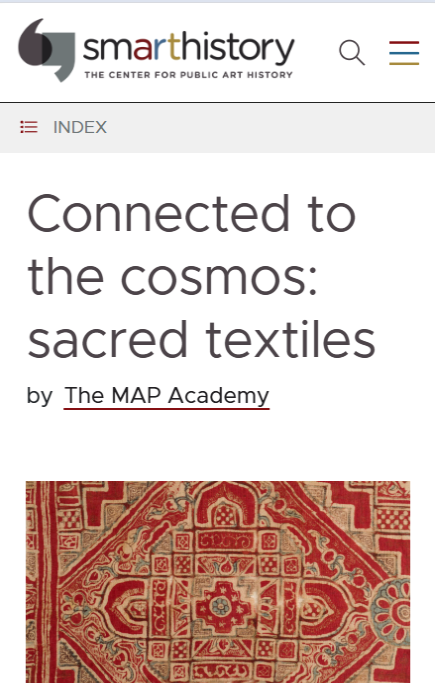
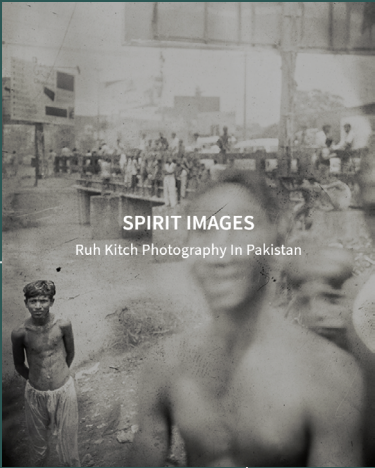
Syndication forms a significant part of our outreach effort as it expands our readership to a wider audience. We have built a portfolio of syndicate partners, who regularly publish Encyclopedia articles and Tangent essays. The articles often go through additional edits, translation, and image processing to fit the format of the platforms. The MAP Academy team members also wrote special features for a few publications this past year.



Our social media engagement, primarily driven by Instagram and LinkedIn, increased nine-fold this year. Our 200+ posts and 250+ stories, which were creatively produced using compelling visual imagery, videos, and animation, garnered more than 268,000 engagements from about 43,000 followers across all platforms. We also made collaborative posts with our partners *Nowruzgan*, *TAKE on Art* and *Selvedge*.



The MAP Academy newsletter serves as an informative tool to keep our audience updated and engaged. Our 7,500 subscribers received monthly newsletters and 20+ special emailers for announcements and updates about our key events and developments.



Screenshots and clippings of a few syndicated articles and special features by MAP Academy in different publications





# People

The MAP Academy team is distributed across different parts of India and the world. We work remotely yet collaboratively with each other and our extended network of consultant researchers, writers, editors, illustrators, designers, filmmakers, web developers, and many others. We are advised by an Academic Review Panel to maintain academic rigour and standards in the content we curate and the work we produce. Our operations are supported by the Administration, Human Resources, and Technology and Development Teams of the Museum of Art and Photography (MAP), our partner institution.

## Leadership

Aditya Pandya  
Sara Krishnan  
Shivani Gandhi  
Shrey Maurya  
Varun Nayar

## Editorial & Programming

Aishani Gupta  
Akshay Sharma  
Amitha Muruges  
Archi Banerjee  
Austin Coutinho  
Karishma Koshal  
Krishna Unny  
Malini Siruguri  
Rachna Shetty  
Sarthak Sharma  
Shahim Sheikh  
Sneha Sridhar  
Tulika Varma

## Multimedia, Design & Outreach

Harsh Singh  
Milad Hussain  
Muskaan Chauhan  
Preksha Kothari  
Shruti Singh  
Yousuf Noman

## Administrative Support

Ashwath Patil (MAP)  
Deepa P (MAP)  
Errol D’Souza (MAP)  
Kavitha GM  
Lovina Paul (MAP)  
Murali Rajachari (MAP)  
Neha Arora  
Rashmi R Shet (MAP)  
Shraddha Jadhav (MAP)  
Vidya Hegde (MAP)

## Academic Review Panel

Anjan Chakraverty  
Anjali Gujral  
Beth Citron  
Cleo Roberts-Komireddi  
Mayank Mansingh Kaul  
Monisha Ahmed  
Rahul Mehrotra  
Rosemary Crill  
Shukla Sawant  
Sylvia Houghteling  
Yael Rice  
Rachel Parikh  
Krupa Desai

# Governance

MAP Academy is a project of the Art & Photography Foundation, a registered charitable trust based in Bengaluru, established in 2011 with a mission to preserving and promoting Indian cultural heritage by connecting the arts to the community. It is registered under Section 12AA of the Income Tax Act and the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (2010). The Trustees of the Foundation govern the Foundation and hold its assets. The Foundation is supported by private patrons, corporate sponsors, grant-giving organisations, and The Museum of Art & Photography Foundation, Inc. — an independent affiliate of the Foundation in the United States.

## Board

Abhishek Poddar  
Ajit Mohan  
GV Ravishankar  
Ingrid Srinath  
Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw  
Nathaniel Gaskell  
Pramit Jhaveri  
Som Mittal

## Trustees

Abhishek Poddar  
Arundhati Nag  
Radhika Poddar

## Trustees USA

Abhishek Poddar  
András Szántó  
Dr Gursharan Singh Sidhu  
Mukesh Aghi  
Rajiv Chaudhri  
Shweta Rawat  
Susan Whitehead  
Yogen Dalal

## International Advisory Panel

Amrita Jhaveri  
Amy Herman  
Arundhati Ghosh  
Atul Satija  
Ayesha Bulchandani  
Esha Tiwary  
ISN Prasad  
Ireena Vittal  
Jane Quinn  
Jorrit Britschgi  
MR Rangaswami  
Mateo Kries  
Nick Merriman  
Prashanth Prakash  
Saleem Asaria  
Shanay Jhaveri  
Thomas Campbell  
Thomas Girst  
William M Griswold

## Patrons

The MAP Academy is supported by the Rural India Support Trust (RIST) and the Infosys Foundation.



Cover & Back Artwork: Textile label featuring an agent displaying an array of trade labels, India (designed), British Isles (printed), early 20th century, Chromolithograph. Image courtesy of Museum of Art & Photography (MAP), Bengaluru

Contents Page Artwork: Poster for Simplex bicycle factory, Amsterdam, Ferdinand Hart Nibbrig, 1897, colour lithography on paper. Image courtesy of Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Details adapted from artworks by Bhuri Bai, Jangarh Singh Shyam, and Nankushiya Shyam. Image courtesy of Museum of Art & Photography (MAP), Bengaluru





**MAP ACADEMY**  
[www.mapacademy.io](http://www.mapacademy.io)

✉ [hellomapacademy@map-india.org](mailto:hellomapacademy@map-india.org)  
in The MAP Academy  
@map\_academy  
f MAP Academy