

Press release

The Kalpana
In desert times
Kunstverein Freiburg
30 May–12 Jul 2020

Press meeting
Thu, 28 May 2020, 4 pm

Into the middle of things, right away, not only in terms of time, but also of space, there is the glistening brown horizon of the future, spread out thin, no more than the width of a grain of rice, but full of promise, visible even in the white ghostly fog and the inexhaustible sterile saline whiteness of the present. However, the truth is that this horizon, which we call the future, is also beneath it all, folded into the planetary archives.

Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay, *Speculation: Desert* (forthcoming)

Founded in 2016, the work of The Kalpana (Sanskrit: create, imagine) centres on what the collective calls the “speculative desert”. Against the backdrop of climate change and increasing desertification sweeping large parts of the world, The Kalpana examines the desert as a site of future visions and science fiction imaginaries. Mapping the speculative desert by three intersecting approaches: geo-cultural, bio-artistic and science-fictional, uniting the respective artistic and cultural research fields of the three members of the collective, Goutam Ghosh, Susanne M. Winterling and Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay.

The first institutional exhibition of The Kalpana *In Desert Times* at Kunstverein Freiburg consists of two main elements: a map of the speculative desert planet and an accompanying glossary. The interactive, three-dimensional desert map presents the collective’s research on the topic of future species, future artefacts, future codes and transforms the Kunstverein Freiburg exhibition hall into a laboratory, that invites the viewer to speculatively explore the desert planet. The sources of inspiration for this instillation are first and foremost the collective’s research trips to the Great Rann of Kutch desert salt marsh on the border between India and Pakistan, as well as to the nearby archaeological site Dholavira, which is attributed to the Indus Valley civilisation. Secondly, the collective draws inspiration from desert planets in science fiction, such as fictional descriptions of Mars. The focus lays on the development of possible survival strategies in a desert landscape by learning from and being with other life-forms such as micro-organisms, plants, lizards and camels and non-life-forms, such as mountain ranges and sand formations.

However, such scenarios of survival on desert planets are no longer purely science fiction. The United Nations Environment Programme warns that at a minimum, three quarters of the earth's landmass are under threat of desertification. These man-made processes are accelerated further by climate change. And yet on the Indian subcontinent, this extensive destruction of land and life has become the norm for drought affected desertified landscapes. Whilst earth turns to dust, governments and corporations dream of colonising Mars. Thus, The Kalpana's interdisciplinary research starts with a simple question: why does the imagination turn to another desert planet as a site of escape, when we are hurtling towards the desert of our own? The collective encourages us to stretch our imaginations and think in an adaptive and transformative mode, beyond crippling doomsday scenarios, visualising futures worth living.

The Kalpana

Since 2017 the research of the collective was supported by: Wellcome Trust, Department of Biotechnology of the Indian Government, KHOJ International Artists Association, India Foundation of the Arts, FORART Institute for Research within Contemporary Art. Ausstellungen: *Report from the fied trip*, KHOJ International Artists' Association, New Delhi, 2018; *The Shape of The Tortoise*, project 88, Mumbai, 2019.

<http://www.thekalpana.net/>

Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay (*IN – Oslo, NO) is Associate Professor in Global Culture Studies at the University of Oslo. He works on science fiction, and he is especially interested in climate fiction and possible futures in film and visual arts. He is the editor of a wide range of science fiction anthologies and magazines. He has won numerous awards for his work on science fiction, including the Strange Horizons' Readers Poll Award, the Foundation Essay Prize, and the Johannes H. Berg Memorial Prize for fandom. He is Principal Investigator of the European Research Council project "CoFutures: Pathways to Possible Presents" and the Norwegian Research Council Project "Science Fictionality." <http://bodhisattvac.com>

Goutam Ghosh (*Nebadwib, IN – Santiniketan, IN) explores speculation and animation through his drawing, paintings and 16mm film projects, and realizes psychological mechanisms, which correspond to his ideas of energies and movements in Bio-geoengineering. Selected solo exhibitions: *Reptiles*, Künstlerhaus Hamburg, 2019, *Bootstrapping*, Project 88, Mumbai, IN, 2017; *...Ascribing to them Birth, Animation, Sense and Accident*, Standard, Oslo, NO, 2015. Selected group exhibitions: *Modernités Indiennes*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR, 2017; *Markers*, David Zwirner Gallery, London, UK, 2017; *Between the Ticks of the Watch*, The Renaissance Society, Chicago, US, 2016; *Thinking Tantra*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai, IN & Drawing Room, London, UK, 2016. Since 2019 Ghosh is a resident at Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart.

Susanne M. Winterling, (*Rehau, DE – Berlin and Rehau, DE / Trondheim, NO) works across a range of media to explore the sentient economy, digital cultures and the social life of materials across our built environment. Selected sole exhibitions: *Schwerkraft und Atem*, Parrotta Contemporary Art, Cologne, DE, 2019; *Gravitational currents and the life magic*, Empty Gallery, Hong Kong, CN, 2018. Selected group exhibitions: *The Sea Around Us*, The Model, Sligo, IE, 2020; *Barents spectacle*, Kirkenes, NO, 2019; *Between Bodies*, Henry Art Museum University of Washington, Seattle, US, 2018; Luleåbiennalen, Luleå, SE, 2018; *Tidalectics*, tba 21, Vienna, AT, 2017; *Sitevisit*, Kunstverein Freiburg, DE, 2017; *Myths of the Marble*, ICA Philadelphia, US, 2017; Contour Biennale 8, Mechelen, BE, 2017.

<http://www.susannewinterling.com/>; <https://planetarysensing.com>;
<http://pandorasbox.susannewinterling.com/>

Programme

Fri, 29 May 2020, 7 pm

Online-Opening

Talk with Susanne M. Winterling, Antonia Lotz and Heinrich Dietz

Sat, 4 July 2020, 2 pm

Desert futures

Symposium with Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Glaser (Physical Geography, University Freiburg), Dr. Nemiah Ladd (Ecosystem Physiology, University Freiburg), Friedrich Neu (Geography of Global Change, University Freiburg) und Susanne M. Winterling (The Kalpana)

We are happy to provide additional information and print-quality images upon request.

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Opening hours:
Tue–Sun, 12 am–6 pm, Thu, 12 am–8 pm
Mon closed
01, 11 May open

Entrance: 2 € /1,50 €
Thursdays free, Members free

With support from Chaos Computer Club Freiburg.



The exhibition is supported by:



The Kunstverein Freiburg is sponsored by:



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