

Avid Learning and Sarmaya present a Panel Discussion on interpreting various forms of the Archive

For Immediate Release

Avid Learning and **Sarmaya** present a panel discussion around the cultural value of the archive and its future role. Are archives subjective interpretations of truths, memories, events and even myths? Is the historian or archivist a subjective interpreter and influencer? How do differing cultures archive and interpret versions of history?

Details of the panel are as below:

Photographer and Archivist **Aditya Arya**, *Visual Artist* **Rajyashri Goody** and *Chief Archivist at Godrej and Boyce* **Vrunda Pathare** in conversation with *Social Anthropologist* **Monisha Ahmed** will probe how the multitude of voices from an archive can be interpreted through differing cultural perspectives. They will also probe the role of technology in shaping the archive and how we preserve and pass on our collective histories and discuss the evolution from oral traditions to material archiving and subsequently to digital archiving. This panel will also touch upon the role and future of business archives as cultural touchstones.

This discussion is part of a series of talks around Sarmaya's newly opened exhibition of 19th century colonial photography titled 'Nation of Portraits / Portrait of a Nation' currently on display at Pundole's.

Read on below for the Exhibition Note:

The exhibition is an attempt to give a new narrative and diversify the meaning and relevance to Portraits apart from the existing meaning. Portrait now has expanded and progressed beyond classic meaning to new understanding of artistic expression. The reinterpretation of this word Portrait and its diversification into all living and non-living things derives its inspiration from the Vedic literature of Navarasa.

Photographers who visited and documented India during the 19th century were receptive and expressive to the Navarasa emotions of the landscape, its people, its monuments and its rulers; it is very evident from their creations and will, form the basis of this planned exhibition.

‘Nation of Portrait / Portrait of the Nation’ is an endeavor to showcase the marvelous collection of historical photographs of the time which created a new history to present day’s generations to reveal the changing landscapes and discover the ancestral familiarity, features and linking to the generations that passed by long ago.

The Exhibition is constructed on the Portrait beginning from 1857, the year that changed the history of the world and travels to the end of the 19th century. During this journey the exhibition goes through the art of photography and the history and story of the portraits it captures, it is the story of silent and resilient nature landscape, it is of Royals in the palace to the common folks in the streets and farms, it is of monuments that were built and destroyed.

Join our experts as they discuss the role of the archive and the stories it tells in making sense of our past, present and future.

Where: Pundole’s, Hamilton House, 8 J.N. Heredia Marg, Ballard Estate, Mumbai

When: Wednesday, 21st February 2018 | 6:00 PM – 6:30 PM - Registrations and Refreshments | 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM – Discussion

RSVP: www.avidlearning.in/ avidlearning@essarservices.co.in / +919769937710; prior registration required

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VOICES FROM THE PAST

Interpreting the Archive

All images courtesy the Sarmaya Collection

Avid Learning and **Sarmaya** present a panel discussion around the cultural value of the archive and its future role. Are archives subjective interpretations of truths, memories, events and even myths? Is the historian or archivist a subjective interpreter and influencer? How do differing cultures archive and interpret versions of history? *Visual Artist Rajyashri Goody, Photographer and Archivist Aditya Arya and Chief Archivist at Godrej and Boyce Vrunda Pathare* in conversation with *Social Anthropologist Monisha Ahmed* will probe how the multitude of voices from an archive can be interpreted through differing cultural perspectives. They will also probe the role of technology in shaping the archive and how we preserve and pass on our collective histories and discuss the evolution from oral traditions to material archiving and subsequently to digital archiving. This panel will also touch upon the role and future of business archives as cultural touchstones. Join our experts as they discuss the role of the archive and the stories it tells in making sense of our past, present and future.

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About the Speakers:

Rajyashri Goody is a visual artist and ethnographer. Grounded in the principles of visual anthropology, her research interests span caste and class structure and interpretations of hierarchical patterns in societies. Since late 2016, she has been working on the interrelationship of food politics, the power of the written word, and caste, focusing on Dalit literature. She has an academic background in sociology and visual anthropology, and her art practice has developed over the last two years, facilitated particularly through engaging in residencies with Khoj International Association, Bamboo Curtain Studio in Taipei, The Eroles Project in Paris, Piramal Residency in Mumbai, Asia Culture Centre in Gwangju, and Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. Between 2015 and 2017, she was a curatorial fellow with the Students' Biennale (an initiative of the Kochi Biennale Foundation). Her recent group shows include 'Microsubversions Playbook' at Conflictorium (Ahmedabad), 'ARTPORT_Good Food' at Hyderabad Literary Festival, 'The

World Next Door' at Khoj International (New Delhi), and 'Odds & Ends' at Gallery Ske (Bangalore) curated by Samira Bose.

Vrunda Pathare is presently heading the Godrej Archives – a Business Archives of Godrej Group (India) which she was instrumental in setting up. She is currently a Secretary of Section of Business Archives (SBA) of International Council of Archives (ICA) and Secretary of Oral History Association of India (OHAI). In the past, she had served as a member of the Advisory Board of Rajbhavan Archives of Government of Maharashtra (India). Vrunda began her career as a research assistant to Mr. Sadashiv Gorakshkar (Formerly Director, Prince of Wales Museum) in a project on 'A history of Rajbhavans (Governor's Residences) in Maharashtra (India)' and 'ONGC (Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd.) Golden Jubilee Museum'. Before joining Godrej, she worked as Assistant Archivist at TIFR Archives of Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. She has been a resource person in many national workshops on archives and has presented papers in national and international conferences.

Aditya Arya is an eminent commercial and travel photographer. Over the last few years, he has honed his skills and knowledge on preservation, restoration and archiving particularly through the documentation of historic photographic works from the Kulwant Roy Collection of the pre and post Independence era. He has played a pivotal role in the establishment of India Photo Archive Foundation and the Neel Dongre Awards/Grants for Excellence in Photography. He divides his time between his photography archive and Museo Camera - the only Photography and Camera Museum in India. With more than 1000 rare and iconic cameras and other equipment, this museum traces the history of photography from the 1870s to the Digital Era. He has been on the Jury of the National Art Exhibition 2014 organized by Lalit Kala Akademi among others. He has also curated several shows of archival and contemporary visual works, both nationally and internationally. He is a guest faculty at Sri Aurobindo Centre of Art and Communication, and also previously at the Jamia Millia Islamia University's Institute of Mass Communication. He was a mentor at Habitat Photosphere, Director at the Academy for Photographic Excellence (APEX), and a Guest Fellow and Curator at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla.

Monisha Ahmed is an independent researcher whose work focuses on art practices and material culture in Ladakh. Her doctoral degree from Oxford University developed into the book *Living fabric – Weaving among the Nomads of Ladakh Himalaya* (2002), which received the Textile Society of America's R L Shep award in 2003 for best book in the field of ethnic textile studies. She has published several articles on textile arts of the Western Himalayan World as well as other areas in India, more recently a chapter on textiles for *The Arts and Interiors of Rashtrapati Bhavan – Lutyens and Beyond* (2016), and the catalogue *Woven Treasures – Textiles from the Jasleen Dhamija Collection* (2016). She co-edited *Ladakh – Culture at the Crossroads* (2005) and collaborated on *Pashmina – The Kashmir Shawl and Beyond* (2009 & 2017). Formerly

Associate Editor of Marg Publications, she is co-founder and Executive Director of the Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (LAMO), Leh.

About Partners:

Sarmaya: The word, “Sarmaya” means property and in our context, ‘collective wealth’. Our passion is rediscovering and reimagining our tangible & intangible heritage through immersive experiences and new ways of engagement. At Sarmaya, we endeavour to make art, heritage and culture more accessible, inclusive, engaging and educational to the broadest array of audiences. We plan to do it by innovatively combining art, technology, design & experience and by engaging with talented young people and diverse cultural communities to bring our museum to life beyond the traditional confines of a conventional space. Our special emphasis is to focus on younger audiences across the economic spectrum. The eventual goal is to have a physical museum in India that will house all our art collections and make them come alive with more personalised experiences and engagement with the public. A welcoming space that transports and opens us up to different periods and cultures and immerses us in diverse ways of perceiving, thinking and being and in the process perhaps be a little renewed and transformed.

Avid Learning, a public programming platform and cultural philanthropy arm of the Essar Group was founded in 2009, with the vision of featuring the best of Indian and International Writers, Artists, Thinkers and Cultural Experts, in the fields of Arts, Literature, Culture and Heritage, Design and Innovation through engaging formats like Workshops, Panel Discussions, Gallery Walkthroughs, Master Classes and Festival Platforms. Since our inception, AVID has conducted over 850 programs and connected with more than 95,000 individuals, a mix of students, homemakers, corporates and creative enthusiasts in different Indian cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Jaipur, Hazira and Vadinar. Over the years, AVID has also gained a reputation for curating thought provoking, trending and forward looking content that art industry practitioners, patrons and art enthusiasts find stimulating both intellectually and creatively. As we look forward to the emerging opportunities and changing practices in this field, we continue to scan the arts and culture horizons globally in search of path-breaking programs that we can bring to our discerning audiences in India. We seek to invite more people into the conversation about the arts and culture by deepening learning experiences through sustained partnerships and series and by diversifying our programming through new spaces, formats and approaches. Thanks to a dedicated and innovative team, as well as a loyal community of learners, AVID continues to give truth to the belief that Learning Never Stops! To keep updated and attend our events, like us on www.facebook.com/Avidlearning, follow us onwww.twitter.com/Avidlearning and Instagram: @avidlearning or log onto www.avidlearning.in