Through Sandbox Collective’s journey of nearly five years, our approach towards the works we produce and curate has seen a marked evolution. What is clearer than ever is the fact that art is at the crux of bringing positive change and increased empathy. In this, we have gravitated organically towards the link between art and gender, which also resulted in the creation of Gender Bender three years ago.

The festival invites applications from artists and individuals around the world, for works that play with innovative and novel ideas around issues of gender. An independent panel comprising of eminent individuals in the arts select the projects to be supported with a trigger grant.

Each project that has been created for Gender Bender since its inception has resulted in impact beyond the festival. The conversations that emerge as the artists and audiences meet and interact in this space are of immense value to the discourse on Gender.

This year we look forward once again to nine very promising projects that the jurors have selected, and hope that the process results in kindling and enabling more such artistic endeavours.

Sandbox Collective is proud to collaborate with the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan on the fourth edition of Gender Bender, as with the previous three.

**Team at Sandbox Collective**
Bangalore

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**GOETHE-INSTITUT / MAX MUELLER BHAVAN**

Dear Friends,

We are honored to present the fourth edition of Gender Bender at the Goethe-Institut / Max Mueller Bhavan in Bangalore. With every year, we learn to appreciate more and more this arts festival focusing on questions dealing with gender, sexuality and identity. This is not just because the participating artists, our partners and the audience are creative and committed people, but also because the festival becomes its own generator of artistic work and activist energy. Projects first presented at Gender Bender have grown over time and developed immensely. I am sure many of this year’s grantees will experience the same because their works are truly stimulating.

In 2018, Gender Bender has also grown in size and scope. The arts festival that it was in the previous editions will be complemented by a discursive programme. For this, we have invited experts, professionals and activists from all over India for lectures, talks and key notes. With Franziska Werner from Sophiensaele in Berlin, Germany, we have invited the curator of “The Future is Female” connecting two festivals – one from Berlin, one from Bangalore – of similar scope and with similar aims. We are sure that this synergy will prove inspiring.

A big thank you to the jury members and of course to our great partner – Sandbox Collective. Gender Bender is once again a highlight in our annual calendar.

**Dr. Claus Heimes**
**Director**
Learning the positions: Love, Sex and Feminism

Filmmaker and writer Paromita Vohra talks to Nisha Susan, editor of The Ladies Finger, about the triplets that should never be separated - love, sex and feminism. What has feminism got to do with doing ‘it’, aka sex? Is love equal to sex? Why is love political? How to have sex like a feminist? Answers to these vital, viral questions in a rollicking conversation, ably illustrated by video, art and Instagram.

August 22, 7 PM

Talking Sport: Why should boys have all the fun?

Over nearly 30 years, Sharda Ugra looked for and found her place in the hyper-masculine world of sports journalism, breaking through this final frontier in 1989, with no other women for company. Writer and historian Ramachandra Guha talks to ESPNcricinfo & ESPN.in’s senior editor Ugra about reporting on sports, working with alpha male cricketers on their memoirs and analyzing the inner workings of the sports world, and navigating what was (is) essentially a man’s world. The talk will be illustrated with images that form Ugra’s career milestones.

August 23, 7 PM
An Evening of Lavani- Presented by Kali Billi Productions

Music, dance, songs and stories - this presentation brings a contemporary context to the traditional dance form of Lavani, that has often been considered adult entertainment for men - the male gaze on the female form, so to speak. This evening promises to turn that concept on its head. It combines multiple narratives, including old traditional Lavani songs which are either unknown or forgotten. Risque, provocative and sensual, this dance drama presentation promises to captivate in more ways than one.

August 24, 7 PM

A Feminist Lens on Performing Arts

A conversation on working in the field of performing arts with a feminist agenda between Franziska Werner, artistic director of Sophiensaele, Berlin, Germany and Kirtana Kumar, actor, director, dramaturg and filmmaker, Bangalore.

August 25, 7 PM
JASMINE WALK

By Ajithlal Sivalal

Ajithlal Sivalal is an actor, theatremaker and performance artist who has performed across stages, nationally and internationally. He is a graduate of the National School of Drama, Bengaluru Centre, and is currently pursuing a masters in Theatre Arts from the School of Drama, University of Calicut.

Project

Jasmine Walk is a performative experience sharing of invisible theatre performances of gender in public spaces. The performance uses the jasmine flower as a medium to explore the social standards of “gender”, and how alternative expressions of gender and identity are treated in our society.

The artist conducted social experiments challenging the existing norms and beliefs pertaining to gender, such as men wearing pink colored clothes, and adorning their hair with jasmine flowers. Casual discussions were prompted around this topic among friends, with relatives, on social media and other public forums. The responses and reactions of the people from all these experiments were devised into performance sketches, songs and an installation, Jasmine Awning.
**TRIAL ROOM**

By Deepikah R. Bhardwaj and Saakshi Joshi

**Deepikah R. Bhardwaj** is a multidisciplinary artist who has worked across design and in the entertainment industry (MTV, Nickelodeon) and now works across media on issues related to gender, society, self-worth and perception. **Saakshi Joshi** is an anthropologist, storyteller and creative writer. Her writings are a patchwork of personal experiences through myriad lenses, including gender, belonging and intimacies.

**Project**

**Trial Room** is a collaboration between Saakshi’s poem and Deepikah’s art where the narrative of a courthouse trial room - where judgements are passed - are juxtaposed onto the intimate space of a clothes trial room. People enter to try on a piece of clothing, but exit judged for their bodies and conflicted in their minds.

The project is a combination of zines and an immersive installation that highlights conditioning by public gaze and opinion, that even within a secluded space like a trial room we are not alone. The installation emphasizes how our measure of ourselves, particularly of the female body, are a result of continuous and often conflicting conditioning which makes us doubt our sense of identity.
Ita Mehrotra is a comicsmaker, illustrator and arts researcher. She often focuses on non-fiction stories with a feminist lens. Her comics have been published by Yoda Press, Zubaan Books, Goethe-Institute, thewire.in, AdAstra Comix and KHOJ Artists Association among others. Ita also heads the programmes of ‘Artreach India’, working with marginalised communities across the country, through art.

**Project**

Drawing Home is a short graphic narrative exploring the boxing-in of gender roles, especially in all pervading structures of home, marriage and relationships. Ita draws from her own growing years, in a relatively non-normative structure, and how that made her question the patterns of gender role play, what it means to make an ‘ideal home’ or even be an ‘independent woman’. The episodes swing between conversations with women her age, uncovering notions of ‘stability’, to memories of her own home, expressive of how life goes on perfectly well when gendered structures are ditched!
STORIES OF INVISIBLE LABOUR

By Jinal Sangoi

Jinal Sangoi lives and works between Mumbai and Los Angeles. She graduated from the California Institute of the Arts and is a recipient of the Tim Disney Prize for Storytelling Arts and Chiquita Landfill Found Art Scholarship among many others. She has performed, exhibited and taught in USA, India, and Bangladesh.

Project

Stories of Invisible Labour is an installation of finely engraved steel utensils documenting interviews with six women. This project constructs temporary spaces for women to heal from the collective memory of violence, exploitation and segregation. Contextually, it explores women’s histories of migration to the metropolitan city, their sensitivities of belonging to a location, their current socio-economic problems, gender politics they deal with every day, and the invisible labor their bodies experience, in the present and in the past. Post the exhibition, the engraved utensils will be returned to the participants to activate dialogues on and of the body, by using them in their everyday life - making these engraved utensils the holders of women’s stories of invisible labor.
Kadak Collective is a growing collective of South Asian women who work with graphic storytelling of different kinds. An ever-expanding group of artists, they work on self-authored projects, comics and zines. Kadak means strong, severe, sharp - like tea.

Project

Kadak Collective is creating a set of graphic works around the theme of ‘breasts’. Boobs, breasts, nipples, have been a contentious topic over the last few years, with lots of discussion and debate on all related issues, especially on social media. Their intent is to open out and explore this theme in different settings, situations and across cultural contexts - ranging from mythology, the male gaze, adolescence, motherhood, male breast reduction surgery, mastectomy, clothing and advertising. The pieces have taken on different visual forms - including comics, zines, illustrations, infographics and written obituaries.
Nairita Thakurata and Sreecheta Das met each other over films and fighting against patriarchy at Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Kolkata. While Sreecheta (pursuing Screenplay writing and direction) is very realistic in her form of storytelling, Nairita (an editing student) is a fantasist.

Project

Her-story is a short documentary made using the medium of live action filmmaking and animation to colorfully paint the lives of two transwomen, Atri and Pinot. Atri is a pragmatic transwoman and the first to appear for Civil Service Examination under the category of Transgender in India, after a long fight to make her identity known. Pinot, on the other hand, is coming out colorfully before the world as a proud transwoman full of optimistic dreams.
Looking Back, Hidimba, Krishna

By Rekandar Padmaja Varma, Chenna Kesava Rao Vanarasa, Alekhya V and Hansa Thapliyal

Rekandar Padmaja Varma and Chenna Kesava Rao Vanarasa are actors with rich experience of performing as well as managing backstage at Surabhi Theatre. They are among other members committed to taking ahead the artistic practices of the theatre group that dates back more than a hundred years. Alekhya V is a younger member. Hansa Thapliyal is an independent filmmaker seeking to document their artistic practice and process.

Project

The name ‘Surabhi Theatre’ is an umbrella encompassing a small galaxy of related theatre groups across Andhra Pradesh and Telengana that have a tradition of working with families of performers, across genders. Here, women often also play important male roles in the theatre. This film is an impression of moments backstage, where two artists, Chenna Kesava and Padmaja Varma, who are both also subsumed in family, lend themselves to their roles for the evening - Hidimba and Krishna respectively.

How does the experience of family give life to mythology? And how is Hidimba taken on, like a mantle, from father to daughter? Excerpts from Maya Bazaar as directed by Padmashri awardee Rekandar Nageswara Rao are also included.
Pranav Sreerag is a textile designer and installation artist living and working in Chennai. He comes from a family of farmers in Palakkad and grew up amidst diverse plant and animal life, as well as captivating cultural practices. He brings these childhood experiences into his art, and enlivens it all through his innovative techniques in textile design, with a dash of madness thrown in.

Project

Bhaya Bhakthi is a large textile-based installation with three focal points: the story of Nangeli, who rebelled against the 19th century Kerala ‘breast tax’, the folk performance of Poothapaatu, especially the modern interpretation by the poet Edassery, and finally the ritual possession of Velichappadu.

The piece weaves together these three strands, all of which arise from the complex interplay of fear and devotion that lies at the heart of traditional farming communities in Kerala.
NAWA
By Santa Khurai

Santa Khurai describes herself as a nupi maanbi from Manipur. It translates as indigenous Meetei transwoman. She is an artist and activist who currently works with the All Manipur Nupi Maanbi Association (AMANA). She has been working on Gender and Sexual Minorities rights-based issues for the last 15 years. Khurai was also committee member (2013-17) for North East at South East Asian Human Rights Association on Gender & Sexual Minorities (SAHRA).

Project

NAWA is a short documentary film on the life of a Meetei teen transboy – 13 year old Até. The lived experiences of non-conforming transchildren of Manipur have never received critical attention. The story of Até reflects how it is possible for a community that might not be gender educated in the formal contemporary sense, to work around problems that non-conforming children face, with love and common sense. Without denying the violence and discrimination that a transteen like Até will increasingly face as he grows up, Khurai looks closely at the hopeful possibility that an indigenous community like the Meetei community can raise transchildren with love and care. How leikai paanba (neighbourhood organising) has always acted like protection for transchildren and given them a relatively safer space than out and out transphobic cultures that violate their own transchildren.
JURY 2018

A big round of thanks and love to Aastha Chauhan, Rahaab Allana, Urvashi Butalia and Vikram Phukan for their time, investment and effort in selecting the grantees for GB 2018. Their contribution to the process is invaluable.

We thank them for their presence at Gender Bender 2018.

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The Burlap People for spreading joy with their beautiful bags.

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Murtaza Ezzi for immortalizing Gender Bender on film and lending posterity to our work.

Indu Manohar for helping us expand the scope of our design.

Gender Bender volunteers - without whose support this festival wouldn’t be what it is. Welcome to our ever-expanding family, and thank you for making sure it went smoothly.

Last but not the least, the wonderful grantees this year for creating the work that they do, and for all the love and warmth.