



ARTS ILLUSTRATED



Editor's note

The theme for this issue arrived with Norwegian-British documentary film-maker Deeyah Khan's 'White Right: Meeting the Enemy'. The film, which traces the rise of white fundamentalism, has some disturbing interviews with neo-Nazis as Khan asks quite simply 'I am a woman of colour, I am the daughter of immigrants, I am a Muslim, I am a feminist, I am a lefty liberal, and what I want to ask you is, am I your enemy?' By the end of the film, you are surprised and overwhelmed with how a simple act of crossing the divide with no judgement, no prejudice or bias or expectation, and by purely listening with the need to understand, change begins.

We knew instantly this was what our theme should be this issue: Of humanising divisions that by virtue of their separateness allow us to build bridges. It was a hard issue to work on because it meant meeting head-on the divisions in our minds, in our cultural contexts, our social-political realities and questioning the parts that make us individuals without leeching the individuality of the other. We had a heightened sense of awareness and consciousness while putting this issue together, but, as always, the magazine took a life of its own, choosing the stories it wanted to tell. (For instance, despite several e-mails to Deeyah Khan, the interview we wanted never happened. But the magazine, smug in its all-knowing avatar, continued nonetheless. Sore point, obviously, for me.)

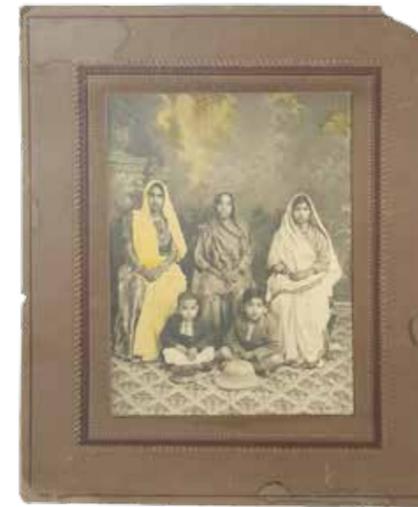
But the stories that did make this issue are each mini revelations of what deep convictions can do and undo, of what art can create and destroy, and how ideas, simple in texture, can have profound implications. And, how, everything begins with a question.

How will we cross the ocean? We will build a bridge of stones...oops, sorry, wrong example, clearly, for the statuesque times we live in.



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Cover Artist



The original photograph used for the cover



Whenever my father travelled on work, *Amma ji*, our old landlady, would taunt my mother, '*Ghiya ji ki bahu, mero miyo ghar nahi, mujhe kisi ko dar nahi*'. It literally translates to – 'I fear nothing, because my man is not home'. When the men were at work, the women were free to do as they pleased. They could step out, meet up with friends, hang out. Much like in the photograph that I chose to create the cover image for this issue of Arts Illustrated. Three women posing with two children...I could not help but imagine them to be my mother, my *mausi* (my mother's sister) and my *maami ji* (my mother's sister in-law), and the children as though they were my brother and I. I recall going to places with them as a child, to the beauty parlour, the blouse tailor, the temple, walking narrow lanes, eating *paani poori*, and orange candies. And *Amma ji*'s prying eyes at the end of the day.

I grew up believing that women must remain scared of their husbands. That is why they step out only when the men-folk were not around. For most of my life I have witnessed issues about liberty for women around me. I have questioned their relationship with men – with their

fathers, husbands, co-workers, or mere co-passengers in public transport. I assumed that I would grow up to be more empathetic.

The cover of this issue is about this strange dichotomy that a woman's life is. Between time and space where she can be as she pleases to be, and where she must conform to forced rules. Between a virtual world and the real one. Between tradition and modernity. Between what is intimate and what is public. And often this divide does not exist in the physical space. It is intangible, one that is born in the mind, constantly fed to the heart through centuries of cultural conditioning.

And now, in my work, she ushers in a new era through some kind of a Blue Screen – embracing and rejecting, adapting and shifting through a multitude of dimensions. In a state of transit. Painting a reality that she likes, finding a safe space, escaping into nothingness. Celebrating the divide that has been a foundation of sorts. Resetting. Refreshing. Rebooting.



Nandan Ghiya

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Rajasthan International Folk Festival, 2018

OCTOBER 24 TO 28, 2018, JODHPUR

Reviewed by SUPRIYA SEHGAL and VAIBHAV MEHTA

A serendipitous drizzle brought a smile to every face as Dapu Khan Ji explained the meaning of the Miraasi song he was going to sing. He sat beneath a native *khejri* tree at the Dhana Bhiyan Chhatri courtyard of the Mehrangarh Fort, as the arches of the onion-shaped tomb in front of him lit up in a soft yellow glow. The song was an aching tune set to an old Rajasthani tale of a woman singing about the absence of her husband during the monsoons. Plump raindrops fell on an audience, but the rain forgot to gather momentum – as if in respect for the oldest instrument in the recorded history of Rajasthani folk culture – the *kamicha* – and its ardent keeper, Dapu Khan Ji. The *Living Legends* evening at the annual Rajasthan International Folk Festival (RIFF) held at the Mehrangarh Fort gently ushered everyone into the second evening of the festival.

Things had been equally surreal on the first day of the four-day festival, when the Meghwals of Marwar welcomed the dawn at Jaswant Thada and Lakha Khan Manganiyar enthralled everyone with his stamp on the traditional *sarangi* and folk songs. People were still reeling from the interactive session on the rich musical Sufiyana heritage of Kashmir, but there was no time to take a break. The mind and the heart had a lot to assimilate from the stellar performances through the days.

Each year, five days of October are reserved for the biggest folk festival of India. It was started in 2007, as a not-for-profit partnership between the Mehrangarh Museum Trust and Jaipur Virasat Foundation, under the patronage of HRH Maharaja Gaj Singh. RIFF was started as a platform to promote Rajasthani folk music, and offer a collaborative space with international artistes to create a unique sound for a limited audience.

This year was no different, as the likes of Alif (Kashmir-based music band), Rajasthani *bhajan* singer Sumitra Devi, Bush Gothic from Australia, Ana Pinhal from Portugal, and musicians from Spain, Reunion Island, the United States and Tehran brought their insignia to the 15th century fort. The setting was equally enthralling as the performances. Especially in the case of the Welsh-Indian storytelling collaboration at Chokelao Garden as its mildly lit arches helped the listener journey from the United Kingdom to Jodhpur in a story led by Angharad Wynne. Equally riveting was the acoustic setting of the ‘Desert Lounge’ in the Rao Jodha Desert Park in a moonlit concert by Sumitra Devi and Mehfil-e-Thar.

The headlining event – Rustle – was curated by award-winning percussionist, Gene Peterson. Together with beat boxer Tom Thummer, and Rajasthani musicians Feroze Khan, Khete Khan and their troupe, he made sure that the Old Zenana courtyard reverberated with unheard of symphonies. The highlights of the performance were a duet between the khartal players with Tom and Gene, and Tiloun Ramoune (Reunion Islands), Teixugueiras (Spain) and Makan Ashgvari (Tehran) returning to the stage to remind the audience that musical boundaries are fluid, unmeasured and unrestricting.



● Dapu Khan.
● Intercative session, Poetry of Mira Bai.
● Ana Pinhal, solo performance.

● Gene,in-performance.
● Tom Thummer.

All Images Courtesy of Rajasthan International Folk Festival, 2018.



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