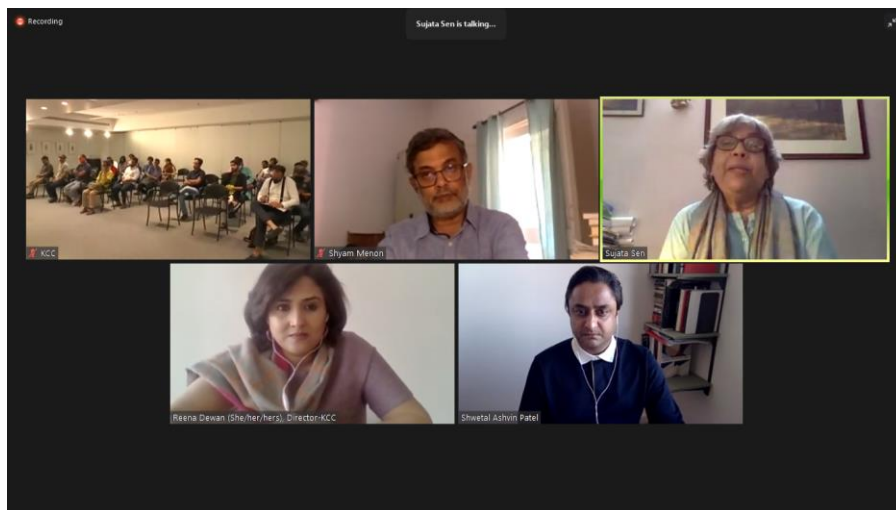


**Kolkata Centre for Creativity hosted
'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam III : The Freezing Moment'
- The Third edition of this Annual Conference successfully builds upon
its two previous editions amidst new normal—**

Kolkata, March 10, 2021: Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC) hosted 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam III: The Freezing moment' at KCC, both through offline and online mode on 6th and 7th March that witnessed leading specialists coming together to exchange views and opinions on a range of subjects pertaining to the world of art and culture.

Spread across two days, the Annual Conference of KCC, which was co-conveyed by Reena Dewan, Director, KCC and Dr. Shwetal A. Patel, Consultant, KCC, highlighted the need for context-sensitive Art Policies, closely analysed the boons and banes of Digitalization of the Arts, and mapped the Significance of the Arts in bringing expression to activism, while ensuring at the same time that Environment & Sustainability were not taken for granted, but became part of the standard practices as art fairs and festivals resumed normal operations. The conference also addressed Mental Health in Education and **Rehabilitation of Children** as these concerns are central to KCC's programming and form an important part of its commitment, especially under the present circumstances. Moreover, the conference looked at the cultural ecosystem and its links to commerce to probe and recommend necessary re-structuring to encourage artistic, environmental and economic sustainability within an inclusive framework. The conference also served as a platform for young performers and scholars to express themselves and present their critical insights.

Highlights from Selected Panels



Session on Day 1 - 'Rehabilitation of Children'

At the **inaugural session** on the 6th of March, Richa Agarwal, the Chairperson of KCC, welcomed the session which was attended by eminent dignitaries, distinguished speakers, including Raghendra Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Government of India, who delivered the keynote address. Speaking on the occasion, Raghendra Singh elaborated on the 'cultural mapping' initiative of the central government to document and produce appropriate data sets of both performing and visual artists in order to ensure employment, especially for the not-so-prominent accompanying artists and artisans. While pointing out that only 1.5% of the total CSR money is spent by the corporates on

matters related to arts, he emphasised on the need for our cultural organisations to deliver better return on investment in order to help build a robust public-private partnership. Singh also shared the Central Government's idea of creating institutions that would not only showcase the best of Indian art and culture, but also generate the required knowledge and train resource-persons for such specialised jobs and responsibilities. Taking forward the discussion, Dr. Venu Vasudevan, the Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Kerala, stressed on the need to involve significant percentage of public money for the development of art and culture. He further remarked that developing liaison between government bodies and art councils, encouraging the involvement of different private and independent organisations could effectively improve implementations.

In the following panel on '**Digitalization of Arts**', Vinay Kumar—the Artistic Director and Managing Trustee of Adishakti Laboratory for Theatre Arts & Research in Pondicherry—talked of how the use of digitalisation in archiving performing arts has shaped up since his student days as a young theatre practitioner. While he acknowledged that 'the experiential quality' that is shared between live performers and audiences gathered in a shared time and space is 'sacrosanct', he noted how digitalising helps performing arts to transcend the geographic boundaries and time-specificity. According to Vinay, by digitalising and disseminating performing arts one can also attract new audiences to physical performances. The renowned contemporary Spanish artist Dora García, who was also part of the panel, reminded the attendees that the art practices have always been under scrutiny of the state, and thus going digital does not really pose any new threat in the post-pandemic world.



Session on Day 2 - 'Protest Against Discriminatory Oppression'

On 7th March, Day 2 of the conference, opened with '**Protest Against Discriminatory Oppression**'—a session which was moderated by Myna Mukherjee and had an eminent panel comprising of Ganesh Devy, the Literary Scholar and the Chairman of the Peoples Linguistic Survey of India among others.

With his illuminating talk Ganesh Devy put into perspective how resistance that is driven by cultural-creations, coupled with social actions, could make long-lasting impact in the development of society, beyond time, geography and circumstances. Filmmaker, playwright and activist Dakxin Chhara from the stigmatised de-notified-tribe 'Chhara' talked of using art as a tool to give voice to the voiceless and ultimately create a sensitive citizenry. While talking of podcasts that could reveal the real yet untold stories of the lowest of the low and discussing the performances he took to the Police Academy, Dakxin asserted that art builds human connections, helps develop awareness against social discriminatory practices, and therefore posited that with peoples' support, art can actually influence the judiciary positively and ultimately make changes in policies. Cynthia Stephen, who is a well-known Dalit activist, writer and social policy researcher, further clarified that it is actually us—the privileged—who have not been listening to the oppressed and the subaltern people, while they

have always been expressing against the discriminatory practice they face in their day-to-day lives. Dr. Andras Szanto, a renowned Museum expert from the US, talked about how art or activism grows out of the particulars of a given society's socio-political realities.

The opening session on Activism was followed by sessions on '**Art Policy**' and '**Environment & Sustainability in Arts**', moderated by Reena Dewan, Director, KCC and Dr. Shwetal A. Patel. Arundhati Ghosh, the Executive Director of IFA, brought to the audiences' attention the shortcomings of our government policies on art, which she claimed were not only lacking in merit, but at times were totally missing. To be more effective and inclusive, she proposed decentralisation in implementing cultural policies by partnering with frontline organisations. The moderators, who are also arts leaders, agreed that indeed a bottom-up approach would yield better results as compared to the conventional top-down approach.

While discussing sustainability in art organisations, Akshay Pathak of Pro Helvetia, stated in no uncertain terms that while he is mindful of growing carbon-footprint, he is all for global-travels, art fairs and festivals that connect artists, people, and cultures. He also pointed out that remote-working has its own downsides, including the loss of the human element that makes art so interesting and engaging. Cautioning against kneejerk responses, quoting Basavanna—the 12th century Lingayat saint, poet and philosopher, Pathak reiterated that those who stand-still shall perish, while those who move on shall stay on. Janne Villadsen, Program & Development Director at Heartland Festival, took a similar position by stating that festivals can create communities in a way that can never be accomplished if we merely function and engage online. She also noted that it has more impact if one actually showcases sustainable solutions than simply talking about them. Discussing the frameworks and blueprint she has developed for Heartland Festival, she remarked that not being sustainable is indeed a bad business strategy in this day and age.

Although organising the third edition of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, or VK—as it has become popular as—was more challenging owing to the on-going pandemic and the resultant travel and social restrictions, as the organisers adapted and re-aligned themselves to these changed-circumstances and redesigned the conference as a hybrid model, quite literally, VK has emerged as the rare platform where the world can come together as a family to converse and deliberate on matters of Arts and Culture.

About Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC)

A unit of Anamika Kala Sangam Trust (AKST), Kolkata Centre for Creativity (KCC) is a multi-disciplinary interactive art and creativity Centre located in Kolkata, West Bengal. It is the first in Eastern India to make Art accessible to visually impaired and differently abled under their 'Art for All' initiative. Spearheaded by Richa Agarwal as its Chairperson, the 70,000 sq. ft. Centre champions the art and cultural landscape of contemporary India since November 2018. It comprises of an Amphitheater, Exhibition & Learning Spaces, Dance studio, Conservation Lab, Books & Materials Library, Creative Culinary space, Craft & Design outlet and a Skill Development Maker's section. Integrating several expressions of art and design to highlight their common creative core – KCC encourages visitors to explore, interact and design ideas on various art forms. KCC works in the areas of Capacity Building, Well-Being, Conservation & Restoration, Craft & Design, Culinary, Visual and Performing Art. It acts as a catalyst for Artistic enhancement through Displays, Presentations, Fellowships, Laboratories, Residences, Conservation, Research and Discourses.



The programs at KCC are designed on the principles of Cultural Diversity, Gender Equality, Conservation of Environment and Inclusion of people with different abilities.

The Centre offers free entry to the public and is open between 11 am to 6 pm from Tuesday to Sunday. For more information about exhibitions and the conferences, please visit www.kolkatacentreforcreativity.org

For further information, please contact:

Sreeraj Mitra / Abhishek Ghosh / Sayanjita Dey / Anwesha Mukherjee

Sagittarius.Inc

Ph: 9007307884 / 9903227841 / 8697719315 / 8697719306