

**Avid Learning in collaboration with DAG presents a panel discussion which examines the dynamic cultural landscapes of Mumbai and Madras, in conjunction with the exhibition 'Madras Modern'**

**For Immediate Release**

In Post-colonial India, just as Bombay ascended as a major urban presence in the West, so too did Madras – a city steeped in ancient culture and rich in heritage, which developed into the cultural and economic powerhouse of South India. Both cities, important ports and hubs for the British that grew from mere fortified settlements, came into their own after Independence and, although since renamed, exemplify the country's early struggles with establishing a New National Identity that was forward-thinking, distinctly modern and post-colonial.

Historically, both cities have always been an integral part of India's impressive cultural landscape. And as Madras metamorphosed into Chennai, and Bombay developed into Mumbai, these cities underwent radical changes and witnessed dynamic shifts in their respective arts and culture scene. Both cities have gradually grown into sprawling metropolises and have maintained their positions as major 'glocal' cultural hubs. However, traces of their nostalgic charm can be found in their wealth of artistic, cultural, architectural and culinary treasures.

Both cities share twinned arcs in urban development, cultural growth and fiscal progress; becoming organic centres for artistic experimentation and design innovation fuelled through financial and industrial growth.

**DAG** and **Avid Learning** present **Madras / Mumbai: Musings on the Modern City**, a panel discussion that traces the history and evolution of the vibrant arts and culture milieu in both cities, presented in conjunction with the exhibition titled "**Madras Modern**" curated by *Art Historian, Critic and Independent Curator Ashrafi S. Bhagat* which examines the Madras Art Movement spanning four decades from the 1960s to the 1990s and its influences on the arts and culture ecosystem on the city as a whole.

The curator of the show along with *Bharatanatyam Dancer Namita Bodaji*, *Architect and Urban Conservationist Kamalika Bose* and *Food Entrepreneur Kanu Gupta* will be in conversation with *Curator, Poet and Cultural Theorist Ranjit Hoskote*.

As the Madras Art Movement was to artists in Madras, the Progressive Artists Group (PAG) was to Bombay, and both movements reveal twinned agendas to shake off the colonial shadow that loomed large over Indian Aesthetics and sought to disturb and redefine what was considered acceptable; and indeed, what was considered Indian in a new emerging Nation. They challenged the established, largely conservative status quo of their times, and strove to break away from nationalist ideas surrounding art in order to adopt a worldly mind-set and acknowledge pioneering development in art in Europe and America; and aimed to do so while celebrating traditional Indian methods and heritage. The leaders of both movements sought to participate in the creation of a national visual vocabulary while retaining and evolving their regional techniques and local materials, which represented a renaissance of thought, ideology and creativity among the cultural communities of both Bombay and Madras. Today, The Madras Movement lives on in the Cholamandal Artists' Village, originally set up by the leading figure of the Madras Arts Movement, K.C.S Paniker. This panel will attempt to reveal the synergies between the two movements, and cities, as they both represent landmark moments in India's art history, with specific respect to modern art.

Art deco was a popular style well into the 1950s, and was representative of the larger idea of a changing, post-colonial India. In the 1930s, Bombay and Madras were quick to adopt the Art Deco style, which was recognizable in buildings and homes across the two cities. Although it took deeper root and had a more visible influence on the landscape in Bombay, the architectural movement certainly had a strong impact on pockets around Madras that were clearly of the art deco style. As Bombay adopted the architecture style as a new city identity, Madras also had a similar agenda to modernize and put forth a futuristic force for a new order that was being established. This panel will attempt to trace the architectural that have shaped the skylines and contributed to the cultural and design ecosystems and sensibilities of both cities.

The discussion will also touch upon the culinary arts and food traditions in Madras and Bombay and how they are representative of the local culture, cosmopolitan nature and ever-changing socio-economic landscape of these two great cities.

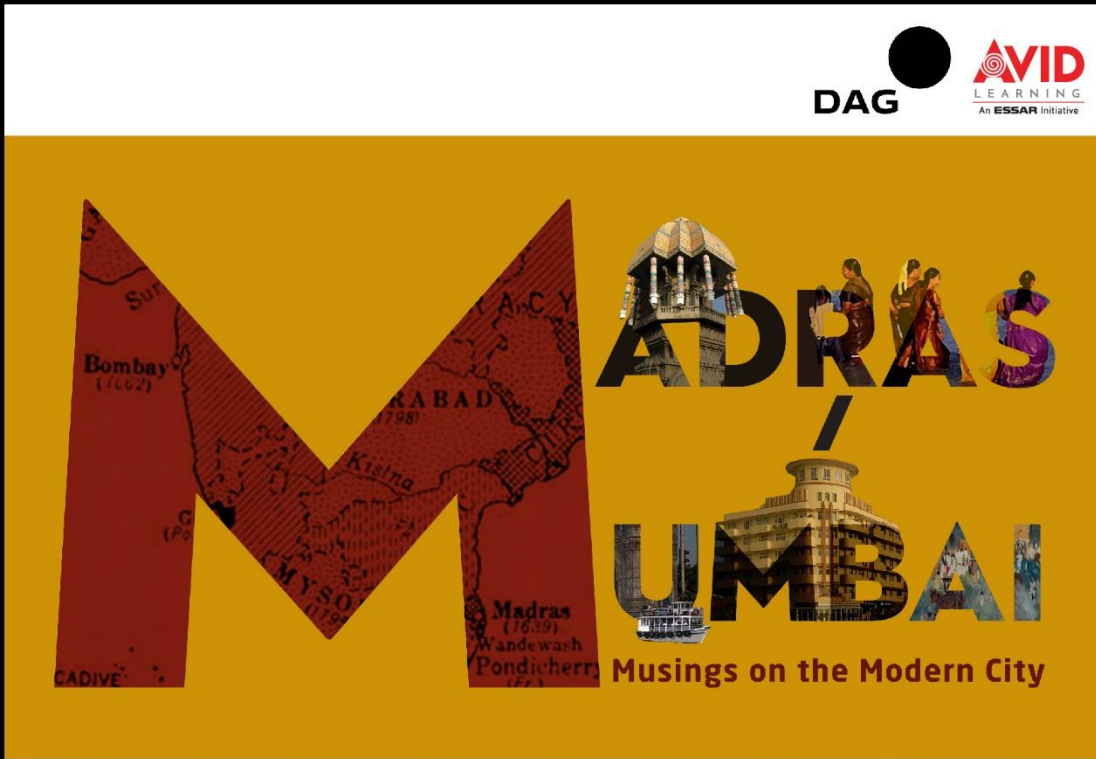
Join us as we retrace our steps to a watershed moment in our shared cultural, national and urban histories!

**Where:** DAG, 58, VB Gandhi Marg, Kala Ghoda, Fort, Mumbai

**When:** Thursday, 29<sup>th</sup> August 2019; 6:00 PM – 6:30 PM – Registrations | 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM – Discussion

**RSVP:** [www.avidlearning.in](http://www.avidlearning.in) (Prior registration required)

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**DAG** **AVID LEARNING**  
An ESSAR Initiative

**MADRAS / MUMBAI**  
**Musings on the Modern City**

**DAG** and **Avid Learning** present a panel discussion that traces the history and evolution of the vibrant arts and culture milieu in both Madras and Mumbai, presented in conjunction with the exhibition “**Madras Modern**” curated by *Art Historian and Author Ashrafi S. Bhagat* which examines the Madras Art Movement spanning four decades from the 1960s to the 1990s and its influences on the arts and culture ecosystem of the city as a whole. The curator of the show along with *Bharatanatyam Dancer Namita Bodaji*, *Architect and Urban Conservationist Kamalika Bose* and *Food Entrepreneur Kanu Gupta* will be in conversation with *Curator, Poet and Cultural Theorist Ranjit Hoskote*. This panel will attempt to reveal the synergies and cultural similarities between Madras and Mumbai specifically through The Madras Art Movement and by examining the artistic, architectural and culinary lineages in both cities. Join us as we retrace our steps to a watershed moment in our shared cultural, nationalistic and urban histories.

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## About the Speakers

**Ms. Ashrafi S. Bhagat Ph.D.**, was the Former Head, and Associate Professor Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, [Autonomous] Chennai. She is an Independent Art Historian, Art Critic Author and Curator. She has written monographs on eminent Madras artists as A.P. Santhanaraj, K.C.S. Paniker, S.G. Vasudev, R.B. Bhaskaran, P. Perumal, R. Vardarajan, K.S. Gopal et al. She was invited by the MARG journal, to be Guest Editor for a special edition on South titled "The Contemporary Art of South India" published in December 2010. She writes on modern and contemporary art in newspapers, magazines and journal. She has written over 200 catalogues essays for the artists. She was invited to be an Art Historian Residence at Concordia College, Bronxville, New York State in 2011. She received the "Women Achievers Award" for her contribution as an Art Historian and Art Critic awarded by the Brew Magazine, Chennai, March 2016. In March 2017 she curated an exhibition invited by NGMA on Madras Art Movement titled Regional Modernity: The Madras Art Movement 1960s to 1990, Painting and Sculpture. In July 2019 DAG invited her to curate the exhibition titled Madras Modern: Regionalism and Identity at Mumbai.

**Namita Bodaji** is the founder of Samskara Academy of Fine Arts, a no-profit organization that promotes Indian music and dance. This organization is devoted to the cause of nurturing talent, organizing seminars, festivals and producing thematic presentations. She led the Spirituality of India Festival on Cape Cod, US wherein she gave lectures, conducted workshops, and performed too. Namita's performances in India and abroad have won her many accolades from the audience as well as the critics. She has several prestigious performances to her credit in India as well as abroad. Some of them being Kala Ghoda Festival, Mumbai Festival, Celebrate Bandra, Juhu Hamara Festival, India International Centre, NCPA and many others. Namita has performed extensively abroad and to name a few of the performances- Rice University Houston, Cornell University Ithaca, Florida International University Miami, University of Houston, Texas A&M, Saltsjobad- Sweden, Temple of Fine Arts in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, India Cultural Centre in Zagreb, Croatia and so on.

**Kamalika Bose** is an urban conservationist and founder of Heritage Synergies India, a Mumbai-based consultancy. Her work lies at the intersection of built and cultural heritage, curation, research and education. She completed her Master in Historic Preservation Planning from Cornell University as a Fulbright Scholar and is a recipient of the SAH-Getty International Fellowship (2016), the European Union's *Global Cultural Leadership Programme* (2018) and the French Ministry of Culture's international program *Séjour Culture* (2018). She has gained international work experience in New York through positions at Historic Districts Council and Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum. Kamalika has worked on community-oriented urban conservation initiatives in Kolkata Chinatown, Worli Koliwada, Pune Cantonment and Azimganj, Murshidabad. She recently co-curated the exhibition '*Bengal's Durga*' at London's Totally Thames festival 2018, has authored three books and her forthcoming publications are titled *People Called Kolkata* (Fall 2019) and *The Hoysala Legacy* (Winter 2019).

**Kanu Gupta** was born in London and raised in the Middle East. His mother was an avid cook and his father was a fantastic eater (every great cook needs curious and critical audience). Every meal was communal and travel was as much about the people we would meet as it was about their food. His parents taught him that the greatest form of travel was to be at someone's dining table in their home. When he was 27, he went to work in the kitchen of Lou Lou, a Belgian chef and owner of a 4-room hotel in Goa. He was paid in afternoon pool swims. Lou Lou taught his that whatever we do, we must do it with everything we have – the relentless pursuit of mastery. Every detail matters. Secret Supper Project started several years later, while he was pursuing a career doing investing at Goldman Sachs. It taught his that it is possible to do what you love and create something of value to the world. He went from being a spectator to a participant in life's processes. Kanu did his undergraduate degree at the University of Southern California and his MBA at INSEAD. He has learned that time, and how we spend it, is the most precious thing we have. To him people matter more than things, and experiences matter more than anything.

**Ranjit Hoskote** has been acclaimed as a seminal contributor to Indian art criticism and curatorial practice, and is also a leading Anglophone Indian poet. He is the author of more than 30 books, including *Vanishing Acts: New*

& Selected Poems 1985-2005 (Penguin 2006), Central Time (Penguin/ Viking 2014), and Jonahwhale (Penguin/ Hamish Hamilton 2018); and the monographs Zinny & Maidagan: Compartment/ Das Abteil (Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt/ Walther König 2010) and Atul Dodiya (Prestel 2014). Hoskote curated India's first-ever national pavilion at the Venice Biennale (2011). He co-curated the 7<sup>th</sup> Gwangju Biennale with Okwui Enwezor and Hyunjin Kim (2008). He was co-convenor, with Maria Hlavajova, Kathrin Rhomborg and Boris Groys, of the exhibition-conference platform Documents, Constellations, Prospects (Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin, 2013). He co-curated, with Rahul Mehrotra and Kaiwan Mehta, the exhibition-conference platform The State of Architecture: Practices and Processes in India (National Gallery of Modern Art, Bombay, 2016).

## About the Partners

**DAG** in the art business since 1993 when we got established, our definitive collection represents the expanse of Indian art practice over the 20th century, covering periods, styles, themes and artistic concerns. The collection showcases artists from early twentieth century, the range of significant modern practices from all significant art centres of the country, whether Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Baroda and the many centres of the south. While the focus is on the modern period, the DAG art collection also showcases the work of some of the most celebrated travelling European artists from the seventeenth century onward. The gallery's Indian modern art collection closely follows contemporary Western art movements, tracing thematic parallels. The DAG collection charts a historic continuum: from artists such as Raja Ravi Varma, early century academic artists trained in Bengal and Bombay, those as J. P. Gangooly, N. R. Sardesai and others. The modern period is led by those such as Amrita Sher-Gil, the Bombay Progressives, including the likes of F. N. Souza, M. F. Husain, S. H. Raza, K. H. Ara, associates as Krishen Khanna, Ram Kumar, Akbar Padamsee, V. S. Gaitonde or Tyeb Mehta; modernists from Bengal such as Ganesh Pyne, Chittaprosad, Ganesh Haloi, Bikash Bhattacharjee; significant modernists from Baroda, such as Gulammohammed Sheikh or Jyoti Bhatt; those from the south such as K. C. S. Paniker, Laxma Goud, P. T. Reddy or T. Vaikuntham, or names such as J. Swaminathan and Avinash Chandra. Our extensive collection provides a critical link for art lovers, academicians and researchers, to collectors and investors. DAG has utilised this extensive collection to mount acclaimed artist retrospectives and thematic exhibitions noted for their historicity and rigour of research. These include first-ever retrospectives of artists such as Chittaprosad, Avinash Chandra, Rabin Mondal and G. R. Santosh; thematic exhibitions on art from Bengal and Santiniketan, those on the genres of landscapes, abstracts and mythological art, and those tracing the legacy of significant artist collectives such as the Progressive Artists' Group and Group 1890. DAG participates in national and international art fairs of repute such as Art Dubai, Art Basel Hong Kong, Art Stage Singapore, Masterpiece London and India Art Fair (New Delhi). Our presence at these venues has brought attention and awards for its innovative pavilion designs and curated presentation of select artworks. At the fairs, DAG has run a consistent programme of art outreach to school and college students and corporates, which includes the pioneering use of tactile aids that create access to art for the visually disabled. DAG has its flagship gallery in Hauz Khas Village in New Delhi and a gallery space in Mumbai, in the historic Kala Ghoda area. It opened its first international location in New York in 2015, in the historic Fuller Building in Manhattan where it continues to hold exhibitions to great success. Expanding its global and national presence, DAG is committed to take Indian modernism to new audiences and present significant, historical world class exhibitions.

**Avid Learning**, a public programming platform and cultural arm of the Essar Group, has conducted over 1100 programs and connected with more than 130,000 individuals since its inception in 2009. Driven by the belief that Learning Never Stops, AVID's multiple formats like Workshops, Panel Discussions, Gallery Walkthroughs, and Festival Platforms create a dynamic and interactive atmosphere that stimulates intellectual and creative growth across the fields of Culture & Heritage, Literature, Art and Innovation.

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