Breaking it Down : Day 1

A broadcast by Surfatial, the collective of Satya Gummuluri, Malavika Rajnarayan and me, 22 July 2016. Watch on YouTube

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I made this transcript by machine from the recording and corrected it against the recording's description and my own records. I have not checked the words by ear. I checked a sample of the speaker names by ear, and corrected those I heard differently. [?] marks a word still in doubt and [unclear] a passage that could not be made out. A speaker is named only where the broadcast's screen or the recording's own words say who is speaking. Fillers such as "uh" and "um" are left out. Times are from the start of the recording.

A name followed by (?) was read from the screen at a moment when it changed from one speaker to the next, so the turn may belong partly or wholly to the speaker before or after.

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00:01 MANDEEP It must.
00:08 MANDEEP (?) There's a lot of noise on the side.
00:13 ADITYA Sounds like a microphone noise.
00:15 MANDEEP (?) Yeah it's microphone noise. Are you moving or are you in the outdoors?
00:20 SPEAKER 3 Window maybe.
00:22 MANDEEP No and I was like
00:26 The modified
00:27 SPEAKER 1 I mu I muted Mandeep just for some time, yeah, so that we can start.
00:34 ADITYA Okay.
00:34 No.
00:35 We can't hear you.
00:37 You can't hear you.
00:39 SPEAKER 1 Yeah, so
00:40 ADITYA Just do my test.
00:43 JEROME Hello from Korea.
00:44 Oh no.
00:45 I do.
00:46 ADITYA Okay. Switch off your video.
01:01 Okay.
01:04 SPEAKER 1 OK, I think it's a good time.
01:07 ADITYA It's time to start.
01:08 SPEAKER 1 Yeah.
01:09 ADITYA Okay. so is everyone yeah?
01:14 ADITYA (?) Yes.
01:15 SPEAKER 1 A la nourita [?]. Okay.
01:18 ADITYA (?) Okay. Welcome everyone to the Surfatial study group for Breaking it Down. we'll directly launch into the web
01:33 JEROME (?) Can anyone does everyone hear me?
01:35 SPEAKER 1 Yeah.

01:36 SPEAKER 5 Yes.

01:37 ADITYA (?) Okay. So this is the study group that we put together, and you already know, to think about different methods of engaging with contemporary culture to call it broadly, but also about different kinds of practices and thinking about practices that we are all of us are involved in. Okay. So the first question I would like to raise today for the study group is to find
02:14 Is it necessary to have a ruler in order to make a building?

02:20 PRAYAS (?) In order to make a build make a building.

02:23 SHAUNAK (?) Make your build.

02:26 PRAYAS I would I would say so. if we don't have a ruler, how would we know how much the how long the brick can be?
02:38 You could use one brick to measure another brick, you don't need a ruler.
02:42 Okay. Yeah. But how would you calculate how many bricks to buy?
02:48 Not all buildings are made of bricks.
02:51 Okay.
02:53 Okay.
02:56 No, there are I mean if we are actually talking of architecture, there are a lot of examples where measurement is not necessarily used or there may be other units of measuring. But if what you're asking is whether a measure is required
03:15 Yeah, measures. Rohini says you can use string or rope and you are you're saying you're asking whether measure is whether I'm saying if measure is required.
03:26 Yeah.
03:27 Because if you build a if you build a hut or if you build like the bower birds, they use sticks that they put together. They just have a thatch, you know, you just collect a bunch of sticks. That's also a building.
03:41 But I'm actually talking about calculation. So I'm saying that if you have an expanse of space, how do you make sure you know how what are its dimensions? How do you make sure you know how big it is?
04:00 Oh I think so. I mean if you're building something you're definitely going to be seeing what is present in that particular environment and then you decide what you want to build based on where you're building it. So you're also going to be and that may not necessarily be a measure but that is an assessment.
04:22 Yeah, it's an assessment, that's right. You can make an andaza of it.

04:25 ADITYA (?) So Mandeep just coins [?] joined the call. So Mandeep the first question for today is that do we need a ruler to make a building?
04:37 Is it necessary to have a ruler to make a building? If to construct something is it n necessarily it is necessary to have rules in that in another sense.

04:47 MANDEEP Did you need to lose? [?]
04:56 One second, guys.

04:57 PRAYAS What about organic ways of constructing? I mean, the kind of construction we see in nature.
05:03 But especially
05:06 Yeah. Like a bird nest, yeah.
05:08 Yeah.
05:09 So like Rohini was saying strings and
05:14 Ropes. So using your limbs also maybe, like one hand long, two hands long.
05:22 But that's still measurement.
05:24 Yeah, that's still measurement. But like
05:27 Be instinctive ways of knowing what you're building. Yeah.
05:34 Approximation.
05:35 Yeah.
05:36 But isn't approximation also a kind of measurement?

05:40 Approximation is
05:44 Like even instinct, right? Like what you were talking about assessing a space. How much space do I sort of to scan the area?
05:51 Yeah.
05:52 So I guess a ruler can be anything. Ruler is a measure.
06:00 And are we saying that measurement is necessary?
06:04 Yeah.
06:05 To construct something.
06:11 PRAYAS (?) Can we talk about what we are constructing?
06:14 It's a building. That's what the question said. It's a building.
06:19 ADITYA (?) The building is just a metaphor. The building can be interpreted as anything. So one like for example it could be the constructing a piece of a performance and then what the incl what is the ruler then if it is the construction of the pieces. The performance is it's construction of artwork that is supposed to be
06:37 PRAYAS (?) You assign the entity, whichever the entity be.
06:40 ADITYA (?) Yeah. What would be the what would be the ruler if you were to think if whether the ruler is necessary for you to produce that structure that you would enlarge or imagine to?
06:53 PRAYAS See, if we were to think of a totally improvised structure, like a nest, y there is a whole there's an idea of a form, but there isn't necessarily a measure. So you're totally improvising. Whatever you get you're putting it and throwing it there. Wherever it lands, you use that as your next step.
07:12 We don't really know that to be a fact. We I mean I they may be I mean a lot of nests do have a very clear rational
07:23 Okay. Right. But l okay forget a nest. Suppose you're just constructing some structure which you don't even know what it's going to look like.
07:33 ADITYA (?) Moving
07:33 ADITYA (?) Anything I don't know about a tool of measurement as much as a tool of construction.
07:43 PRAYAS (?) So the ruler is not a tool of measurement, but the ruler is a means of construction.
07:54 SHAUNAK (?) No me dé des... [?]
07:55 MANDEEP Whether
08:01 Ruler for yourself becomes the
08:08 MANDEEP (?) In which you start defining what the construction is for you.
08:15 ADITYA (?) So it's the you mean to say the to chart out a particular cycle for it's almost like charting a blueprint for you, is that what you're saying?
08:27 MANDEEP W well, what I'm saying is that I mean in terms of dance when you think through making performance when you're thinking through dance you're in a way laying out the part of the process is laying out the codes for yourself. What are the parameters of what you want to explore and in a way that becomes your ruler for the work.
08:55 PRAYAS But is that a ruler or is it a vision? Is it a ruler or is it a vision of the complete construction?
09:02 PRAYAS (?) I think vision of the complete construction sort of gets developed along the way. But
09:10 So you're you are saying that the ruler can be a metaphor for something that I may choose it to be in a personal sense.
09:23 MANDEEP Yeah, in a way yeah.
09:29 PRAYAS So m here's what I feel about that. I think the moment we make something into something else we lose the ability to look taking it for what it is to begin with. So if we im you know, we just let the ruler into the room you know, maybe five minutes back and if we replace

it with some something which is a variable at this point, let's say everyone's personal notion of a ruler, then we can't really see it for a ruler anymore.

10:04 But it's an abstraction, right? So it is still a

10:09 So for that matter, even measurements it depends on which metric system one may be using.

10:17 SHAUNAK (?) But it's still a measurement.

10:18 PRAYAS It i yeah, so it i if I mean if you're looking at it in as a parallel if one person's using a different metric and another one's using a different metric, the measure is not going to really matter it very much.

10:35 Right.

10:35 It's like two speaking to different languages.

10:38 That's right. But at the end of the day you're communicating something.

10:44 ADITYA (?) So but if you were to think for example Shaunak just to bring you in, if you were to think script as a as a ruler and then you think that

10:54 SHAUNAK (?) Whether that is the ruler with which

10:55 ADITYA You are trying to construct something. And then whether you would like to script look at the script as a ruler or look at the script as something else, what would be the vision of that page?

11:05 SHAUNAK No before that I just wanted to quickly say that within a large part of computational analytics, there is a huge difference between counting and measurement.

11:16 -huh.

11:16 So for example the etymology of the word digital comes from the word digits, right? Which in itself is broken up into zeros and ones because originally within the arithmetic predicate of it we could only count up till ten figures and because we're using our fingers. And every all our metrics, all our forms of measurement, be it the feet, be it the meter, etc. ha has to do between the ridges, between the gap between the ridges of our fingers. That's how the original metrics system originated. So I've been very interested within the originary impulses behind Euclidean geometry, etcetera. And a large part of what we think configures and constitutes foundationally the ruler has come from that kind of a counting system.

12:00 PRAYAS No but regardless of what the genesis and what the you know what the root of the word is, I think there is a generally accepted common meaning of the word ruler. And you know, if you're talking about the function of that a ruler can perform

12:24 Then I think it's possible to ask the question that Aditya asks that to make a building do you need a ruler?

12:35 ADITYA (?) Do you do you need a bit of structural thinking? Yes, it what you say. There's a noise again.

12:47 ADITYA (?) Yeah, there's another thing.

12:49 SHAUNAK (?) Yeah, Rohini actually was testing a mic.

12:52 PRAYAS Yeah, I oh there, yeah.

12:54 Yeah, it but

12:55 Yeah.

12:57 John Mike [?] What?

12:59 PRAYAS (?) It works, you can hear me.

13:00 ROHINI (?) Yeah, definitely.

13:01 ROHINI (?) Okay. Good.

13:05 ADITYA (?) Yeah. So we just I was just going to Shaunak that do you think then that is the origin of the idea of measuring and also the idea of the ruler?

13:18 ADITYA (?) Yeah.

13:18 ADITYA (?) But do you think that ruler is somewhere things are got systematized to be measured? What do you what were you arriving at? I was not the GPM. [?]

13:27 SHAUNAK Like a sort of a jump off on what I was saying earlier within computational analytics. Now you asked about a screenplay, right? And one of my favorite lines about a screenplay is that a script or a s screenplay is chance killed word by word. And I really love that line because what it does is that it talks about an unmapped sort of potential wherein each measurement, if you take a word as a finite, discrete unit of a measured attempt, kills chance word by word. And in that sort of a bounding of

14:00 PRAYAS In the in the sense that you're seeing each word in the script as an instruction, as a specification.

14:07 SHAUNAK See, but that's the thing, no within commu any kind of communication, the minute it gets verbalized, externalized, etcetera, utterances themselves become instructions. Be it a script, be it to my mind free.

14:21 PRAYAS Language is not an instruction, is the it's the act itself, right? So when I'm talking to you, the sounds that I make, the words that I say are they mean f something for themselves within themselves, right? So there is no secondary interface between language and what you are hearing and how you are parsing what I'm saying.

14:45 SHAUNAK Nahi, matlab I mean instructions in the sense of one specific let's for the lack of a better word, think of a command which delineates its border areas in terms of what it means, what its interpretative bandwidth is and what the conditions of its possibilities are. So I you can say anything. So

15:03 PRAYAS Who Samasniya na [?] w like w what I'm saying is if I'm saying something how is that an instruction? Like how is that I don't really understand that.

15:14 SHAUNAK No, I meant it in the sense that because Mopi asked me how measurement and a ruler would come in within the realm of say script writing or and when I say that each and every word that you're writing becomes reducing of the surface area of what the script could have become before you wrote it. So in that way there is a kind of mapping of what you intended to do, which immediately then gets fixed, which then immediately gets like put on the table, delineated the minute you start writing. And in that sense I mean it as a measurement slash metric, slash instructive unit in its being. So it doesn't I'm not saying ki har shabd or har utterance becomes an instruction. That's not what I mean at all. I mean in the sense of there you putting out into the world a quantifiable discrete unit by what you're putting in. And a lot of angst within any kind of creative endeavor for me to

16:07 PRAYAS Curious about the use of your word instruction with language because I mean mujhko context me Samaja ki I'm not saying that you're saying that all of language is instruction, but even if you're saying some part of language is an instruction, I don't really get the connection.

16:27 ADITYA (?) So okay, sorry, go ahead. I'm just saying that we have to speak in English because there are non Hindi speakers in English.

16:34 ADITYA (?) I'm so sorry.

16:37 SHAUNAK So w b language in this case was this was just a response to the screenplay universe that Mopi which is that each word within this case one small linguistic unit. so for example, if one is writing any kind of a scenario, any kind of a dramaturgical unit, within that each word, each gesture that you're writing down becomes a kind of bounding down, becomes a kind of an introduction of finitude into the world that wasn't yet written but was in the process of becoming. You know what I mean? Like other people have to write

17:09 PRAYAS (?) Thing you write in a script takes time some bit of time for it away from the actual potential

17:17 SHAUNAK I mean it sounds very vague, but what I mean is just to break it down into an actual

17:23 TESS (?) I think I get it now. It's some part of the time mode.

17:26 SHAUNAK If I was writing of a scene where a fire erupts in this, in my head I can think of the potential of this sort of emergence into the cinematic world as completely unbounded, right? Like could be I mean i it can be anything. But that sort of process of like potential becoming

immediately gets stripped and cut down into discrete units of either shots, either language, either whatever. So any kind of

17:53 PRAYAS (?) It's some kind of a finite thing. But how

18:00 How can a building unit be equated or a building block? How can you equate that to a measuring device? You're just laying down the blocks. You're only lay see what I can say is I don't if I just throw a bunch of building blocks together as they occur to me without having any preconceived notion of what's going to emerge from it. If I'm going to throw them down and whatever I have I put it together. I don't I'm not going to measure it. I'm not using it to you know, it's like a very ad hoc kind of construction. So I don't need a measurement device.

18:33 PRAYAS (?) But maybe.

18:34 PRAYAS (?) It's not measure in that sense you know like I think Rohini mentioned before that you don't see it as a measure but more as a means of you know, constructing.

18:45 PRAYAS (?) If you are if you're thinking

18:47 Of words, for example, if you are thinking of words to capture the potential idea.

18:51 Yeah.

18:52 But to me those look like more like building blocks than some sort of a measurement or a rule set even.

18:57 How is the ruler a tool? the ruler if Rohini you were saying that, how is that a how is that also

19:06 You need words, isn't it?

19:07 I was basically

19:09 ROHINI The minute I hear the word ruler or even for that matter measurement, it seems extremely rigid and sort of set in a particular structure and a particular direction already. So I mean if I'm taking what Mopi had said in the beginning and saying that okay, if we look at this as just a way to unpack other forms of practice which might include performance and just art, I mean practice, right? Anything which is not maybe that specific. But I like the word measurement maybe more than ruler, but what I'm just thinking in terms of my own context because there's very rarely any form of I mean it's interesting, I wouldn't use the word measurement, but I'm trying to figure out in my own head right now what it is. And it might be

19:50 ADITYA So measuring the experience I thought in the context of you is the measuring the experience a very important question for you is what I was trying to think in especially in your in your experience context.

20:04 PRAYAS No, but I'm not sure if it's if it's that personal a question actually. So because i if a ruler is a word in the this language that we are using, that means it has a common sense of what it means to be a ruler.

20:24 You know, I'm interpreting it in terms of scale. Like even in music, if you have a scale, it's it is somewhere hinting at a certain region of articulation. You're not talking of very specific enunciations or whatever, but th you're just largely make creating a boundary of where the articulation is happening.

20:53 ROHINI Well what's interesting also is I mean measurement makes you think of time as well and then I think that opens up quite a bit of stuff because time can be, you know, in different ways, not only in terms of the whatever you're doing or whatever, but also as I think I forget now, who was talking about also time. I mean I was thinking even in terms of performance when something has a certain you know, it ov it sort of unpacks over a over a duration. And I think measurement in terms of also how you construct that duration is quite interesting. So yeah.

21:25 ROHINI (?) Right and you don't even necessarily need to keep track of the time. It could just keep going.

21:30 PRAYAS (?) But

21:32 But performance when Mandeep you were referring to performance earlier, would you would you agree that performance is basically at its most basic form, it's a time based media. So you have to measure the duration.

21:52 MANDEEP Yeah, and I'm wondering whether if we bring it down to this conversation of the act of building itself and the role of a ruler in the act of building and for me if I were to really think about what this ruler could be as far as performance making is concerned, dance is concerned then it would be something that measures time for me. So a metronome. it could be something that measures space for me which is a ruler of measuring tape. And so in a way if I were to actually think can I do without these things in the act of building then the answer is yes, very much. And what that opens up as a possibility is this the idea of intuition and the idea of actually experiencing time and space through the body in a way where you're not relying on any kind of exact measurement but you're actually experiencing it in the way in a way then it becomes a personal experience and then coming back to this idea of then the ruler really becomes your own personal experience of time and space and it becomes a more intuitive building process.

23:25 PRAYAS But is it basically would you say that performance is basically time based media?

23:33 MANDEEP I think it's time and space. It can't not be space. Yeah.

23:37 PRAYAS (?) It can't not be space but it doesn't need to be time, is what I would say.

23:41 Yeah.

23:43 Doesn't need to be time. So you are saying it can be infinite.

23:48 It can be infinite, it can be zero, it can have an indefinite duration, like it doesn't have to be fixed. Not always, you know. I mean there are different sorts of performances, but it's not necessary that it has to be fixed.

24:00 ADITYA Yes. does this link I was just wondering whether the one that of intuition and the that Mandeep was about can be is that what Shaunak you were talking about chance? Is the is the chance is it very related to that idea of the chance that you were referring to in terms of the script writing and what it does to in actually the making of the film?

24:26 ADITYA (?) Yeah in fact the

24:32 ADITYA (?) Oh, I think

24:33 PRAYAS Yeah, no. There's a problem.

24:36 PRAYAS (?) No, and he dropped off. Shaunak was dropped off.

24:39 ADITYA (?) Yeah, Shaunak has dropped off.

24:40 Jerome, please come in.

24:43 TESS (?) Can you guys go?

24:44 JEROME Can you guys hear me? Because I'm having trouble.

24:46 PRAYAS Yeah.

24:46 No, it can be a yeah.

24:49 JEROME (?) Okay, so I've been trying to keep track. I figure Korea's bandwidth I thought it would be much faster, oddly. But i in terms of ruling and I was joking with Mopi during the preparations and what's on my feed in terms of measurement, I'm looking at it from viewpoints of y you don't necessarily have to follow the rules of the ruler. And the way that it moves in time. Like as if the ruler, if anything, is a hopeful barometer in a lot of cases where the visualizations I've had from everyone's descriptions, like I'm thinking it could be used as a shovel. What direction are you moving? Do you have to move? When do you know if when the building's done? And other questions of and are you building with somebody else? Are you agreeing to what the ruler has? So hopefully this makes sense.

25:42 ADITYA It's a variety of things, that's what you're saying.

25:45 JEROME Yeah, but also the how often are buildings made alone and really thinking about I have I have to say this coming as an American living in Korea in my lovely Facebook feed that I joked with Mopi that my Facebook feed is basically three things right now of mostly activists and artists and scholars. And it's this really odd moment where it's Donald Trump, it's Pokemon Go and it's black people dying. And it's all the same people. And yet there's this barometer that we have where I was joking with Mopi. I was like, Pokemon Go miraculously is causing

more world peace and community building than any policy I've ever seen. And we're and we're already trying to think about how to make this a art piece or how to use this ma these mechanics and if anything, it's looking at these like tactics of organizing and building in the larger sense and like what rulers do you have to keep on discarding and what ones are you having to keep agreeing on and making. So as you're all talking about like time and nest building, which is a great example, I'm really looking at what are the types of rulers that we often have to decide whether they're worth it or not because we're often building with other people.

27:02 ADITYA (?) To add before we go to the next question?

27:06 TESS For me I've been thinking about the idea of a ruler as a framework of mediation. So say in if we think about that in relation to art history the ruler or the framework would be which canon you would like to associate with. So are you going to adhere or work towards the Western canon or are you going to challenge that? You're going to challenge the centres of the art world and things like that.

27:33 ADITYA (?) So they won't start away. [?]

27:35 That's actually directly addressing to what we are actually trying to do. Also of course coming from different experiences of building and making and of course not building and not making.

27:49 Shaunak, would you like to finish before we head? Because I'm going to go to the next question now.

27:54 SHAUNAK (?) No, I actually just joined and I missed the last two bits so

27:58 ADITYA Let's proceed and then we'll come back to when we have the second question so is can we think of the present as a scaffolding rather than as a structure?

28:09 PRAYAS (?) Can you say that again?

28:10 SHAUNAK (?) Say it again.

28:11 ADITYA Can we can we think of the present as a scaffolding rather than as a structure?

28:22 JEROME (?) Yeah can you type that question as well, Mopi, on the chat?

28:27 ADITYA Okay, one.

28:29 PRAYAS (?) Thank you.

28:32 TESS (?) So what I think of straight away with that question is basically the way we the way we articulate contemporary art now in the world. So contemporary art essentially follows a Western framework, no? So when we think about practices outside of this, so vernacular art or indigenous practices we do not consider them as contemporary, even though technically they are contemporary because they have had the same process of modernization. That process though has been separate to the West. So that's what I think of in relation to this.

29:13 PRAYAS I think off the off the point Tess made and having that I think it's

29:23 JEROME The immediate thing I think about is in scaffolding, especially the ones that I see around in a lot of the modernization, the fast velocity of how cities are being built often to the detriment of the people actually living there. in these massive cities around the world, I look at scaffolding where you don't know whether something's being built up or brought down. And often it's with it's made to withstand a multitude of different weather conditions. And with that you often see like a traditional scaffolding of like straight planks and staffs, but I think kind of linking back to the first question, it's like what if scaffolding was made in the same way and more loosely in terms of building where the most beautiful scaffolding in a way could actually break down these considerations of the contemporary in a way where scaffolding is actually more accurate than a building itself.

30:15 PRAYAS (?) But

30:17 Yeah, you know.

30:18 Actually talking about your question actually used the word present. Yeah. So can we think of the present as a scaffolding than as a structure? So you're not actually referring to the contemporary, you are referring to the present.

30:32 ADITYA Yeah.

30:33 Well I would say they're both are interrelated n even if even though they're not synonymous, certainly they are interrelated because we live in a condition that's called the contemporary, but we live in a temporality that's called the present. so in that way

30:49 PRAYAS (?) But the word the word present is more is less historical. Yeah.

30:56 ADITYA It unfreeze us unfreezes from the burden of what the contemporary aims to be or predicted.

31:03 PRAYAS (?) That is true. I'm wondering how what Tess was saying about n multiple notions of what contemporary includes how that is relating to this question actually.

31:21 ADITYA Interesting because I would say that the present and the past, for example, a lot of for example, especially in the context of the indigenous or the folk and tribal in the Indian context, somewhere even though it is operative in the present, it is always seen as a past.

31:40 PRAYAS (?) No, not no, I don't agree there. not anymore, at least an and

31:46 PRAYAS (?) I'm not changing.

31:48 When it's try when it's when it's being historicized, that's often an error that's made, that they try to historicize it and say this w you know, when it when we talk of traditional practices, we don't take into consideration that the tradition is being lived now as we live. So it I would see it very much as being part of the present. I don't necessarily relate it to something that is past. And I think if that only happens when it's erroneously historicized.

32:23 ADITYA That is what I'm trying to say, that there are there are frameworks that try to do that even though despite of the real fact that they are living cultures. They are the ones that operate simultaneously in the same present that we seem to be inhabiting. So that is that question. Sorry.

32:41 ROHINI I think that what I do like about just thinking

32:44 Scaffolding is that the word also suggests a certain kind of constant in-the-process-of-ness, if you know what I mean. So there's a sense of bearing which is sort of implicit and the idea that it's constantly being constructed. So that's interesting, I think.

32:58 MANDEEP I also like just adding to that this idea of it being more formative in nature, so it feels like it's almost the di the difference between a p a position and a proposition.

33:13 ADITYA (?) Yeah, like

33:14 PRAYAS (?) They're both at the same time, are they not? We are constructing a present, using the present as a scaffolding. So the structure of the present is evolving as you know, as the present while using the present itself as scaffolding. But are we looking to it as the present that we're constructing or are we looking forward? I have a feeling sometimes it's more like

33:38 ROHINI (?) Constructed by the way, you know what I mean? Like I or made

33:42 ADITYA (?) In the moment.

33:43 PRAYAS Future when the future is constructed from the part from

33:46 I mean the present. If you're concerned about your experience of the present actually, then you are not thinking about the future that you are linking to.

33:57 And there's two things, right? Even the future, unfortunately, whatever it is, it you cannot predict what will happen at the moment. So it really depends. It's going to you have to live the present.

34:08 ROHINI (?) No, I'm saying you're living the present, but I don't know if you're actually actively constructing the present. I feel like

34:14 ADITYA (?) That's great.

34:15 JEROME Yeah.

34:15 SPEAKER 1 So strangely, we see

34:17 PRAYAS (?) To be living in the scaffolding and that's the building and not the

34:21 Well, but no, if you think of the present as a structure itself, the present is always a structure that's evolving.

34:28 ADITYA We are trying to say that it's the scaffolding that is actually confused whether it's building or taking it down as zero.

34:34 PRAYAS I would also like to question the statement that you cannot construct the present because I definitely feel that we can configure and change aspects of our experience. So we can choose to tune ourselves to what which layer of experience we want to be concerned with. But that's

34:54 If you're c if you're tuning it, that means you're actively doing something, which is an act of construction, right?

35:01 ADITYA (?) But you're also producing fiction of a s with fiction of a wholeness of a structure, no?

35:08 PRAYAS The f there is a already a whole. It's not about whether it's there or not. It's already there.

35:13 Well the whole idea of a fiction again is about something that might I mean it's not about the present. Fiction is not necessarily completely about the present. It has another realm as well to it.

35:27 TESS I would argue that fiction is basically the idea that the present is a universal thing. So often when we think about the present we think of it as a very flattened idea of something that's very universal, when in fact that's completely impossible and there are always multiplicities of the present.

35:49 PRAYAS (?) True.

35:51 But for the one who's experiencing it, there is only that singularity, right? There isn't a multi even though all the multiplicity and the whole is all there, I am only able to measure what is going on right now with my senses and I'm able to respond to it in the moment.

36:09 TESS Yeah.

36:10 PRAYAS But you can experience more things at the same time, but isn't that possible?

36:17 If you if you tune, again it's a matter of tuning, right? And there are limits to it of the there are limits to the approximation that we go through.

36:25 JEROME I think along those lines of the limits it's funny because my house is actually having scaffolding on it right now back home and I've I've spent a lot of recent time on it and the things that I have there are often you when you're often building the scaffolding to be more accurate or to be more useful and you don't pay attention to the structure because you're just making sure is the scaffolding going to hold and work? And then I often find myself looking away from the building to the sky and what and wasting time in this really wonderful way where I don't care about the structure at all and

36:59 PRAYAS (?) What about the structure of this scaffolding?

37:01 JEROME Absolutely. And the scaffolding ends up like becoming more important than the structure for more of the majority of the time because I'm spending more time on it versus the sh structure itself.

37:12 PRAYAS Cool. Yeah. And then if you just could lift the structure the scaffolding out and just put that as a standalone structure, that would itself have some kind of a value.

37:23 PRAYAS (?) I'd probably live there at this point.

37:28 JEROME (?) But no, it's nice because the scaffolding you a lot of lovely time is wasted where you just and it's okay. Versus if it were on the structure it there'd be more things to get done or more of agendas and scaffolding is lovely in that it kind of it lags in this

37:46 JEROME (?) More healthy way, at least from my perspective.

37:49 PRAYAS It's an in processness, right? Things are you're in the journey, it's happening. You know, once it once you've finished the repair or whatever it is, it's done. Okay, what's next?

38:02 ADITYA In processness I would turn to Mandeep. Mandeep, would you like to add on to the in processness? Because I know that we've always had these conversations about the relevance of a scaffolding than actually arriving at a structure.

38:19 MANDEEP Mm- Well actually I had I had this question also first about looking at scaffolding also as a structure. And I'm wondering how why we would wanna keep those two separate because I mean in what ways is scaffolding not a structure? but I guess it's the question we have is about

38:44 PRAYAS Maybe the scaffolding is not a structure because it is in s in the state that it is, it is compiling something else. It is not

38:55 ADITYA (?) It is only holding a structure. It's not really a structure. It's also it's also a process to which a particular item structure is.

39:02 PRAYAS (?) Doesn't have structural stability, how will it hold anything? Yeah.

39:06 I agree with Mandeep that you have to like have some sort of a structure to have a scaffolding. I interpreted structure as like a building, like something more complete and finished. and a scaffolding is something yeah, and the scaffolding is something temporary and that was only there for a little while.

39:27 But I don't think structural stability is a necessity is a pr is a prior condition for having a scaffolding. Because how you

39:36 If you may how can you have a scaffolding that doesn't work together? What is the use of it?

39:41 Imagine a microscope, I mean think about a microscope what a microscope has in its viewing drawer in the on the slide actually is so the microscope is a scaff scaffolding for the slide.

39:59 Yeah, but it the microscopes clearly has a proper structure. It's designed to hold a slide.

40:04 As far as the as far as the slide is concerned, the microscope doesn't really matter.

40:11 It doesn't, that is there, but and but the thing is if we are looking at the present and we're talking about the present w which part is that? Is that the microscope or the slide?

40:25 MANDEEP (?) So present is the slide and the microscope is the

40:32 PRAYAS Scaffolding. but I'm saying that this is a

40:36 You think the present is the scaffolding. You don't think the present is the scaffolding.

40:41 Then if scaffolding needs structural stability is what I'm qu just questioning, whether the scaffolding needs to have structural stability.

40:52 What if it doesn't? What if it's a shaky structure? Then how does it what happens then to the whole cell center? [?]

40:58 If the if the scaffolding is big bigger than the structure, if the scaffolding matters and if the and what is being studied actually, the present in this case.

41:12 ADITYA (?) But are we are we seeing scaffolding as something I was actually seeing it something as temporary and in a site kind of atmosphere than actually a complete wholeness, like the structure actually intent?

41:23 ADITYA (?) Can a drone be a scaffolding?

41:26 ADITYA (?) What?

41:27 TESS Can a drone be a scaffolding?

41:30 TESS (?) Yes, it's a scaffolding for data now.

41:35 PRAYAS Right. So it has its own stability even though it's not fixed.

41:43 ADITYA (?) Certainly. before we move to the next question people who would like to add something, Rohini, Shaunak, you've been silent most of the part of the

41:56 ADITYA (?) This question.

42:00 SHAUNAK (?) Should I go first?

42:01 TESS Yes.

42:02 SHAUNAK Okay. So just to move this away from the architectonic sort of base of it, but because I think your question was also geared towards a temporal experience of the contemporary. I really like the terms in the process of and I think somebody I think Rohini invoked that there is a

by the way-ness to it, you know. And I really like that sense because one of my favorite descriptive lines about the contemporary movement, and I mean this very specifically about the digital internet heavy contemporary moment that we inhabit, is she uses this term the enduring ephemeral. I mean it's a very true

42:40 And still

42:41 It's a deliberately sort of an oxymoronic term, which I really like. Because the sense of there being constant transience, constant ephemerality, like there's a being a constant sort of fleetingness, and that in itself being a durational, enduring experience is I think a close approximation of the kind of time experience that we have. For me, I mean I'm absolutely fascinated by the figure of the GIF, you know, the GIF on the so much of so much of like the GIF that we see inundated across social media and so on has to actually do with transient moments looped ad infinitum, right? So a sneeze, a fall, a frog, a really awkward, undignified sort of a fall into a puddle. You know, those are the raw material from which so much of GIFs are this thing, but yet they go on looping ad hominem ad infinitum. And that sort of a vector for thinking about our contemporary moment our contemporary experience of temporality I think is very productive. The sense of constant fleetingness, constant transience is central to both our use of the internet, of the way we inhabit the digital world and so I mean just to move away from an architectural base to an interface base, I think could be

43:59 ADITYA It's a different approach to the in terms of course the digital infrastructure which doesn't have the same structural kind of logic but has a different completely different in even if you term think in terms of architectural, it has a completely different architectonic approach to how it creates experience.

44:21 SHAUNAK Yeah, I mean absolutely. Also because the architecture now increasingly with leaps and bounds takes into account the interface, right? And I think there is a certain quality of temporal experience that we have on interfaces. And the word scaffolding also can be thought of in this world of interfaces like mentioned.

44:43 ADITYA (?) Rohini, before we move on to the next one.

44:47 ROHINI Well maybe we can I mean I don't want to bring it in now, but I did like that we talked about fiction a little bit. that might be fun to discuss a little more. But I don't know if that's next on the agenda. But I don't have anything in mind. I liked what Shaunak said very much. That was

45:00 ADITYA Okay. So the next question for our thing today is contemporary cultural field and it's very important for all of us in this discussion, a school where deviations are both celebrated and monitored? Are we working in a condition are we condition schooled to being too deviant or too and whether these deviances were being monitored?

45:29 ADITYA (?) Whether that's a good idea.

45:30 SHAUNAK Become the condition in which contemporary is spoken about.

45:34 SHAUNAK (?) Mr. Bully [?], can you expand on the question here?

45:36 SHAUNAK (?) Yeah me yeah please do that.

45:38 SHAUNAK (?) No, I'm not.

45:39 ADITYA I mean to say that the there is a I'm not saying it's directly related, but there is always this question of contemporary as being out of joint with time, right? It's a deviation from the time for the present, for example, the present that you inhabit. It's a condition that thinks out of the time than what actually it inhabits. So in that way whether we being in a contemporary cultural field is actually in that way whether a school or a structure within which constantly this idea of the deviations are produced and monitored, whether the deviation becomes the benchmark within which something the contemporaneity of something is addressed. Does that make sense?

46:27 ROHINI Yeah, but I think it depends a lot on who's asking the question. You know what I mean?

46:31 Yeah. Yeah.

46:32 That's sort of crucial to this.

46:36 ROHINI (?) Okay.

46:36 ROHINI (?) Can you expand? I sense that

46:39 ROHINI (?) Are we asking it as participants in the sense practitioners within the or are we talking about the people who get to say who is a deviant and you know what I mean? Like this is a deviant

46:50 ADITYA As people who are participating in it, because we are coming from extremely different trajectories, but at the same time in different backhand and fronthand ways, participants of it's discursive, artistic, different kind of practices that we embody as practitioners. so in that way, being participants of it, what would be our take on thing like that? Whether that the idea of the deviation and the idea of deviation and its relationship with what contemporary means or what contempt what is framed as a contemporary, what would be that what would be the what kind of approach would you take to this concern?

47:31 PRAYAS See if deviation is considered as novelty or innovation, for example. Novelty and innovation are slightly different, but in an evolutionary sense it does help to have, you know, I think it is celebrated in that sense because here's something new, here's a new direction of thought. And it might be interesting to go in that direction. So it's a deviation of sorts from the path. So now how now whether that's fetishized is another question. Like I mean, are we only looking for novelty and you know

48:03 So there's different types of deviations and I do think it is

48:10 Also but deviation is also seen literally as deviation, right? As something which is taboo or something which is contrary to what is considered

48:24 The convention. But in a contemporary cultural field, right? Like what does what is a contemporary cultural field? Is it the margins?

48:36 PRAYAS (?) Exactly

48:38 The main bubble, the bubble of the mainstream.

48:42 PRAYAS (?) But why only mainstream, right? Like if see if you talk about contemporary art, it could encompass you know, the edges.

48:50 ADITYA (?) Also

48:51 PRAYAS Yeah, also exactly. So where are we on that spectrum?

48:54 The m the moment you school something the moment you school something then you are in some ways institutionalizing it. And so if you school deviation it isn't a deviation anymore.

49:07 PRAYAS (?) That's what I was trying to actually arrive at. Is that is it like where deviation becomes a system or a structure?

49:14 Yeah, so what are you deviating from when you're not I mean, you stop deviating the moment it's schooled.

49:23 PRAYAS (?) So yeah. So as I was saying earlier with your fetishizing. Yeah, go ahead.

49:27 MANDEEP (?) Mandi up saying them. [?]

49:28 Yeah. So from the perspective of dance it's this holds very true in the in the way that ruptures and discontinuities become sort of the evidence you wanna look at when you're looking at contemporary work and they become celebrated in some sense. these deviations from forms and the way one thinks about constructing performances become things that you look out for or almost sort of propagate. But in a way the minute you think of it as a school I'm not and I don't mean the a dance school here at all, but if you're if you're actually looking at it quite consciously as

50:22 MANDEEP (?) As a collective, what this also does is that it the deviations sort of begin to pull you in the same direction, in similar directions.

50:34 MANDEEP (?) Yeah.

50:34 MANDEEP (?) In a way can it becomes very much the opposite of a d of deviation, where it is a collective deviation. yeah. I don't know how that makes sense.

50:46 TESS (?) Que les dé comer [?]

50:47 ADITYA (?) A norm in what I'm trying to arrive

50:49 Which is also adding on to what Mandeep is saying, yes, in various fields that we one broadly can call contemporary culture, where we come from multiple practices, perspectives, etc. But so is what I am trying to say is that is when I say school, it's whether the deviation has become a system systemized form of approach. It whether it's condition

51:17 ADITYA (?) Yeah, I would say that deviation is not a good idea

51:20 PRAYAS Systematized, even if it is systematized, can you predict what the deviation is? Maybe you can't. Like you don't know what the direction is going to be. Yes, we know that there is going to be a deviation, but we don't know what that deviation is. So how there is still value in it, even if it might be institutionalized.

51:37 No, but the system at this point might even have a bias towards the deviation. At this point.

51:45 Yeah.

51:46 Interested in the is the system is interested in the out of mode deviation.

51:54 No, so this is how I see it, that the moment a deviation is made, it ends up getting schooled. so the institution swallows up every deviation. It really consumes every deviation and then

52:08 Yeah.

52:09 ROHINI (?) Not enough to qualify even as being a critical mass where you can school it. It's no longer a deviation, right?

52:17 PRAYAS No, but see all kinds of all kinds of events are going to form patterns on the graph. So no every pattern on the graph is that what you're calling a school?

52:31 No. The what is the average, the mean will be the school. So when the mean exp is very elastic and is you know, is absorbing every little peak on the graph then you know, the graph is just expanding.

52:50 SPEAKER 8 But then it's no longer [unclear]. So then it'll have to shift.

52:54 PRAYAS Yes.

52:54 Nay the mean cannot be the school, no?

52:59 PRAYAS (?) The

52:59 PRAYAS (?) The

53:00 PRAYAS (?) The school

53:00 PRAYAS (?) Is the one who decides what is the mean and what needs to be

53:05 ADITYA (?) You think was the school is one what co-opts? What's the deviation is?

53:10 PRAYAS School is the one who commodifies.

53:13 PRAYAS (?) Commodities. But then that's what

53:19 We have to imagine an agent like the school. Well because data is data. Data is data. There is information in front of you. It's up to you with what you choose to do with it.

53:32 SPEAKER 5 There are those who use the data in specific ways to create certain thought jails.

53:41 PRAYAS Yeah, but why do why do they have to be thought about?

53:45 Because I think that's the condition that a lot of people are dealing with, right? And

53:50 ADITYA (?) At the moment in terms of almost on the c on an everyday context.

53:54 ADITYA (?) Yeah.

54:03 PRAYAS No, but we I'm not saying that because we are not experiencing that agent, we don't have to deal with it. I'm saying that if we are talking about the data, if you're talking about instances or events which are cultural practices and this is the field. If we're talking about the field actually, then we have a set of data. So if can we just look at the data? and I'm saying that

54:38 Is in the field.

54:40 Unfortunately there is a socialization and normalization of which data is considered.

54:45 ADITYA (?) Yeah, just

54:46 ADITYA (?) Build up on

54:46 ADITYA (?) So there is always a data making, data construction of the data and the leak of the data, no? And whether the leak of the data is the deviation that one could talk about. What is the because there is sorry, what was Shaunak saying? Did someone say something in between?

55:04 TESS (?) Keep going.

55:05 ADITYA Okay. So the whether then if you're saying that the data is being built and someone said that the data is also being g built in a specific kind of structure

55:18 ADITYA (?) They don't know.

55:18 ADITYA (?) Also deviations like the leaks where the data built for a specific purpose is actually reoriented into a completely different context. But the point what I'm trying to arrive at is that whether that is the c condition that is slowly becoming the an a and I would not say institutional because it is a very heavy loaded word. That's why I used school. Maybe it's better to go back to school and think whether what are the implications of this shift.

55:50 PRAYAS See, I think it is more worrying the if the deviations are constructed in a very you know conscious way. Like if a deviation is considered to be the desirable and people are consciously trying to construct a deviation, that's a problem. It's not spontaneous anymore. It's like somebody decided I have to go and it's like product placement. I mean I have to go in direction.

56:14 Is activity on the field and activity on the field is not always a manipulation. There is a genuine activity on the field which

56:25 No, it is there but I am saying that what is worrying to me is manipulations of that nature.

56:30 Huh, but manipulation ki baat I mean manipulation is coming after the fact in the if you look at the fact itself.

56:40 I just

56:40 Somebody says, this is what deviation is. Suppose a person in influence says, this is what a deviation is, and that's where the thought is going to go. They become this oracle. That's a problem.

56:54 But before that, if we if we just look at the events, if we just look at the field, if we just look at the mode of it. Yeah.

57:04 Things are happening. Things are happening. Deviations are happening. But what I'm saying is in contemporary situations there is also this problem of people who take the position of the soothsayer or the oracle and say ki this is where things are supposed to move and this is the next new thing and you know, who are you to say that?

57:27 JEROME (?) Yeah.

57:28 MANDEEP (?) Also wanted to add at this point to this idea the what happens when deviations are de

57:43 ROHINI (?) Yeah.

57:44 SHAUNAK You are breaking, Mandeep.

57:46 MANDEEP Gets fear of becomes central to

57:50 SHAUNAK So I couldn't say that ball [?]. Mandeep, can you say that again?

57:53 MANDEEP Okay. No, I was just talking about how when deviations become the one central thing in the way that you think about making and producing work. I'm talking specifically from the field of dance.

58:10 MANDEEP (?) -huh.

58:11 Then what gets celebrated is the ideas of individuality much more than ideas of community. And I think that this is a conversation that comes from a conversation that I was having with somebody a practitioner who sits in the West and was talking about how contemporary dance in particular has become so much about what an individual has to propose as a deviation really that a lot of practitioners now feel a sense of feel the need to connect to a community where individuality doesn't matter anymore. And I think I just wanted to sort of put that in where deviations also begin to help us make us look at ourselves first in a way.

59:09 ADITYA (?) So you're saying that the deviations are actually directing towards something else, that's what you're saying.

59:15 PRAYAS (?) I think he's saying that it's

59:16 PRAYAS (?) Individually.

59:18 MANDEEP Yeah, the individualistic it becomes about what can I propose which is different from everyone else. Yeah. It becomes about what different

59:29 PRAYAS So Mandeep but I'd qu I'd ask you a question there. So if it is individualistic do you think that the larger collective is giving enough room for that individualistic expression to survive as individualistic or is it going to dissipate into becoming more collective? You know, like if is that individual expression going to be kind of taken over or adapted by the collective or is this included as a collective? Because that's essentially I think what the question is asking whether the field is just a school may a school as being a territory where the deviations are mapped and celebrated.

01:00:23 ROHINI Can I just add to that one thing? also can you know that brings into the idea also of duration. I mean, you're not going to be a deviant forever if you're going to continue to do the same thing, right? So at what point do you

01:00:33 PRAYAS (?) Yeah.

01:00:34 ROHINI (?) Then I don't or do you and if you keep shifting stream then maybe you will be a deviant for a longer period of time and then maybe then you will not be part of the it won't be so easy for you to be subsumed within this collective school, whatever. But yeah, and the X doubaby. [?]

01:00:48 MANDEEP I just wanted to say actually I like the idea of the space between the individual and the collective. Mm- I'm not I'm not proposing one or the other, but I'm saying how do these two things rub against each other? and I think what deviations propose is a very keen eye on individual on the individual.

01:01:15 MANDEEP (?) Okay.

01:01:15 MANDEEP (?) In the collective and I mean it's certainly a thought that's forming as I speak, but

01:01:20 ADITYA Okay.

01:01:21 MANDEEP (?) That's just but I feel like where you say deviations are celebrated and that's the only thing that gets celebrated, it can become problematic.

01:01:32 ADITYA Problem.

01:01:34 MANDEEP We have the

01:01:36 ADITYA Who have not I would had like to add people being silent.

01:01:44 JEROME Yeah, I think in terms of

01:01:48 In terms of the deviations, I see it a lot where I work. my day job is teaching both high school and at Stanford and it's most of my time frankly is kind of telling everyone stop trying to make yourself different for the sake of being different, but where's the work where is the work really coming from?

01:02:04 Yeah.

01:02:04 Incredibly frustrating because it's not even about adding to the field or even adding to your own growth. It's a jet and I don't want to say it's a generational thing, but definitely it's something where I have to point out like are what are you actually trying to move towards? And again, it's this getting back to my first statement about the very first question about like the sense of a ruler and do you follow the ruler or not? And I think the ruler for a generation trying to put their individuality forward to say that whatever I'm putting out is moderately or somewhat important, that I will deliberately go out of my way, and I'm very afraid of seeing that because they may be moving a f they may be moving away from something that's actually more honestly their work and who they're becoming. I see that in terms of a lot of cultural difference, of racial difference in the United States and especially a lot of the political things I'm sure many of you are seeing on your newsfeeds and many of us are trying to anchor a certain identity given the chaoticness of what's a young generation there doing. So you see it in a cultural field where there are a lot of activists, artists, and cultural producers, to where deviating is just a act of trying to stay afloat. but it's I think it's really on teachers and educators and many of us in this group to kind of re anchor our various communities towards that it's that in

between space what it's also irreducibility. Like you can't you can't simplify like, oh, you're gonna make it just by moving away from something and then you get it gets cool and then your work is published and all that. Like it's never that simple.

01:03:36 ADITYA Absolutely. Absolutely. Okay, sorry?

01:03:40 SPEAKER 8 Yeah, this team.

01:03:42 ADITYA (?) Rohini, you were saying something?

01:03:44 ROHINI No, I was just saying I agree. That's absolutely disagreeing with what he said.

01:03:48 ADITYA Shaunak, would you like to add? Tess, would you like to add?

01:03:51 SHAUNAK So sorry, Tess, do you wanna go first?

01:03:54 TESS (?) No, you go for it.

01:03:55 SHAUNAK Okay. So very quickly I like very much what Jerome said last, but I think like two specific things are were quite interesting to me in this. one is memes and how we think about deviation, exceptions and copying so within largely the theory of memetics and trolling. about how exceptions within a perceived whole then get attacked. So in a lot in a to a large extent the way we think of memes has to do with even within universal Darwinism, there were three main categories. One was that if you have any sort of variation in any skill set, it could be i in any sort of a sample set, it could be genes. It could be any sort of information, it could be computer analytics, it could be anything. If you have variation and then you have selection, you have so evolution right from like a sort of Darwinian standpoint also is design out of chaos without the aid of mind. You know? So even within so any kind of information that gets copied and over time pattern recognition happens, patterns emerge. It's within so when we think of the exception of the anomaly it's usually any kind of aberrations within the perceived pattern of it. which is why a lot of recent theory or writing around trolling is of a lot of interest to me. So it's I mean this in the sense that of course today and this is a bit of a digression, sorry, okay today we inhabit a virtual space more than any other generation obviously ever has. So we inhabit time or we inhabit time with our extended virtual technology itself more than any other generation ever has. And the one of the costs of this is that we're clearly moving towards a time when the very idea of a meat space body I use the term meat space instead of real world because I don't like that term. But the very idea of one unitary meat space body will become a primitive one, will become an anachronistic one. And one of the ethical costs of this sort of a major shift ontologically and so on is that is anonymity. So much of trolling for example happens around happens in situations where people don't where people aren't revealing who they are. anonymity is the base of it. And there's also a perceived pattern set around the people that they are trolling. And so much of violence and so much of I mean the kind of things that Jerome was invoking here has to do with a relationship between the whole and the part and like whether the sum of the parts add up. And in that I think it's a profoundly political question more than anything else. But

01:06:51 ADITYA (?) We should definitely sorry to interrupt because we are we are out of time. so we will continue we are going to rant a lot tomorrow together. So we will continue trolling and ranting tomorrow with each other. thank you everyone.

01:07:06 Yeah.

01:07:07 ADITYA (?) So

01:07:08 ROHINI (?) Yes.

01:07:08 ROHINI (?) Thanks

01:07:09 SPEAKER 3 Thank you.

01:07:11 JEROME (?) Right.