# Who's not there?

*A broadcast by Surfatial, the collective of Satya Gummuluri, Malavika Rajnarayan and me, 2 April 2017.* Watch on YouTube

---

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.

Prayas Abhinav · prayasabhinav.net/videos

00:00 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Okay, so we're live now. So the first question for the session I'll just introduce in a bit. But so Satya introduced the format earlier. but I'll just also introduce the kind of rituals we have followed in the conversations across the years. So the rituals have been basically about the conversation style. The conversation style is that we tend to address the issue or the m matter at hand directly instead of trying to kind of referentially try to link to it or talk about peripheral issues or whatever, right? So we just we try to be as direct as possible and yeah, okay. So I'm starting. So what was your motivation?

01:03 To be a part of this exhibition.

01:11 I'll repeat. So what was your motivation to be a part of this exhibition? The exhibition

01:19 We are referring to is the exhibition that opened with that we were all that you were all a part of and so what was the motivation

01:34 Yeah.

01:37 Hey Okin's also here, so it's good. So I

01:40 Yeah.

01:42 ADITYA So we can pick whoever wants to go first, Mriganka you or Shiu Jin you, whoever. Did you hear the question?

01:53 MRIGANKA Yes, I heard it. So it's Shiu Jin can go first.

01:55 If you're

01:56 MRIGANKA (?) And talk.

01:59 OKIN (?) Hi guys.

02:01 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Hi.

02:02 Okay.

02:02 Yeah.

02:03 OKIN You I'm sorry for late.

02:06 ADITYA No problem.

02:11 ADITYA (?) Can you

02:13 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT I'll repeat the question again as so maybe you didn't catch it. So what was your motivation to be a part of this exhibition?

02:25 MRIGANKA So maybe I can go first since I have the question. So I think the first thing is definitely that since it is it is not a self-generated or it is not self-organized in some sense, but since it is Aditya's, you know you know, invitation to the thing, but the I think one of the motivation which become primary to the exhibition is that it is it is one of the fur like the many instances,

but I think in an exhibition of various collectivities, or I think the question of collectivities which is primal to this exhibition and also I could understand that this kind of you know Surfatial also would be more of a you know like event connected to the collectivity. So I think that was I think this larger issue of you know understanding how different what are different conditions of working as collective or how collectives can work together. So that can be for us it was one of our the part the main motivation to part of this exhibition.

03:32 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So it was essentially a more it was about the category. So it was if because you identify as a as a collective and research question here in that sense was to was working on collectives. So

03:55 No, I don't think it's a it was a category. Sorry to interrupt.

03:58 Was purely about the it was purely about the content, it was about the category or what was it like?

04:04 MRIGANKA No, it's both, but in a sense what I'm saying is that usually you know, when you construct I don't want to get into the construction of exhibition or construction of event, but somewhere like any kind of you know like happening is like undoubtedly in is a collective, you know, in some sense of temporary collectivities or this kind of things. But primarily this exhibition, which is very I think Aditya's thing was also that why he chose on leave [?] to work like he chose four collectives and this kind of a thing. And I think that what was his motive behind his motivation, which was kind of was very pronounced. So I think that became You know, like it is not that okay it if it is the you know the category, but it is both that what he was you know referring to the lot of the works, but at the same time why this four? Why not? Yeah, but we can

05:05 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Can we can I think maybe move beyond the you know the formal the formal kind of stating of the of that which is kind of clear so in the sense we all know Mopidevi's kind of motivation because it is stated as such but what was your like the personal your personal in this in the sense motivation to be part of this because I'm sure you would be getting lots of like invitations all the time so you would be making a choice that you want to be part of this and not that so what was your

05:40 MRIGANKA So that's why I told you that for me it is not category but it is the whole also I didn't know that the opportunity to understand or to know conditions of collectivity, the which is basically whatever that means. It doesn't mean only

05:56 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So what does that mean to you?

05:59 MRIGANKA It means that how what are the different conditions of working in collectivities in different kind of contexts can so it can be an investigating point. So I am definitely interested in because one of our project also one of the future projects is also to work with various collectives. So I think that kind of communicated and that was very interesting that maybe an opportunity to meet.

06:26 ADITYA Just to interject, because this is something that I and Mriganka have discussed in detail actually, is the idea that this is also the I would say the one of the I would say only cases where this particular collection of collectives are brought together. In the sense that you have an idea of yes, there is a Propeller Group that exists, or there is an Okin Collective that exists or this imp [?] or Desire Machine that are there. But perhaps this is and this is also for me most interesting question, and I think Mriganka and I have discussed it, is that we have never really had in conversation with collectives outside of the Indian context. Maybe there was an opportunity for you. to have in different projects where you are exhibiting with some somewhere of course internationally in a Biennale context it's where and also in a Biennale context it's too many people and the conversation is not as precise as we are thinking. It's more cacophonic, it's a completely different dynamic. But I think what I what interested both of us or I think what the conversation has been is mostly about how sharing yeah but I mean at this

07:42 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Point i think what we are going into is the dynamics of the event i mean the let's i mean we can take it for granted that of course the event itself had its attract you

know had its point of it was attractive for maybe different reasons to you know the participants and all of that but I mean that we can take for granted because the event has in that sense already been you know already been opened it has already been seen people it has already generated response so we all in that sense know that you know so we are not in that's in that sense trying to rationalize that which has already happened but after it has happened we are basically trying to understand

08:30 What caused it to happen in the way that it did? And that surely must have been more than like these prosaic in that sense, you know, criteria that okay, it is about collectives, it's about these collectives on an international stage, these four collectives in the South Asian region. I mean, all of these are maybe the you know the prosaic the criteria, the but beyond that. So I mean I'm trying to understand like okay, so what was the kind of interest point for you personally? I mean, it's not about picking on Mriganka. I mean, of course so anyone can jump in the

09:15 Yeah, maybe Okin can speak to the question too.

09:22 OKIN Yeah, so I think I have many reasons.

09:27 Very personally, I think.

09:30 Yeah.

09:30 Yes but first I'd like to see those many different as collective in there. And then I really want to see the what how they is work together, each other.

09:45 And then absolutely I want to see the Aditya too and then we just talk about more what is the collective in the contemporary art.

09:58 That and then

10:04 Yeah, of course I the Delhi is the Delhi is the new space is for me in my life. So I want to see the different city too.

10:20 OKIN (?) Yeah.

10:21 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Managed to see the exhibition.

10:23 ADITYA (?) They just saw the answer. [?]

10:24 OKIN Yes.

10:25 OKIN (?) No, so we just

10:27 OKIN (?) You did not go?

10:30 ADITYA (?) We went there but after opening.

10:32 ADITYA (?) After the opening of it.

10:33 OKIN (?) Yeah. You know, so the process was like that. So

10:42 Yeah, I d I think that is this is my personal the motivation to be there.

10:49 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So amongst all these things, what have you what d what have you come to value and maybe, you know, enjoy what did you come to enjoy the most? So what did you value, what did you enjoy? what became a kind of

11:08 OKIN Yeah, so we just missed to meet the chance to meet other artists from the show.

11:16 As you know but we the walk to as many space in Delhi.

11:28 Also we met as many artists and other people or the just people there. Also we visited as many historical places and then yeah. So we heard and then we studied about the new space in Delhi. That's the good things for us and after exhibition.

11:52 OKIN (?) But I'm so sorry for sorry to meet the other artists.

12:00 ADITYA They even if you added yet too? [?]

12:03 So basically Okin were trying to were trying to come for the opening, but we they could not come. But I have actually met Okin in very briefly in two thousand thirteen when I was in Korea. And then and maybe if that did not happen, then the conversation was and when I when I wanted to do a project about Korea and then suddenly, oh wait, we have met this collective. And I started then researching on in detail and then that's how the conversation then I touch based with them and also I was in touch with them regarding other research. So it was a very interesting conversation and also Okin, do you want to talk about a little about how the collec-

tivism within k Korean context works for you? How does it being collective within Seoul? Because there's also other collectives, how you share the

13:01 OKIN (?) Yeah, so these days we have many collective teams in Korea. Mm- But the whole team is so different because generally it's different and they with all the people's the artists' life is so different. So it's very interesting things in now.

13:31 But you know, so our life is very tough.

13:37 OKIN (?) Especially for young artists.

13:42 Yeah, that is the kind of the reason why we meet together. Why we meet and work together, you know.

13:50 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT You talked about life being tough, is that like things like funding and spaces? Yeah.

13:56 OKIN It's really tough to survive as an artist in Korean society.

14:01 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Mm-

14:02 OKIN So we have to share the space and then we share the some the

14:11 As many things. Like the we share the work and yeah.

14:21 So I think that is kind of the reason to us making group.

14:32 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Shall we move on to the next question? What is

14:34 I think we'll move on to the next question.

14:37 That's a rapid fire that's

14:39 Yeah, so we're going to go through quickly through six questions and we have just six minutes for it. so the first question either of you can answer or maybe everybody can pitch in for the first question. How is the temperature in the building you are in?

15:01 I didn't hear it. What did you say?

15:03 How is the temperature in the building you are in currently?

15:09 OKIN Now here it says twenty one or twenty two.

15:13 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Is it comfortable?

15:16 OKIN Excuse me?

15:18 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Is it comfortable?

15:20 OKIN (?) Yeah, it's comfortable. Because this is a spring season, so yeah, I think this is popping moment.

15:29 MRIGANKA (?) For me also it is for me also it's twenty degrees, so I'm also quite comfortable.

15:35 ADITYA Okay.

15:36 For me it's a five degrees.

15:40 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT How comfortable are you?

15:42 ADITYA I'm actually fine.

15:46 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT How what yeah? [?]

15:49 What about you guys?

15:50 For me it's

15:51 Forty-two.

15:52 Oh yeah. Yeah.

15:54 Wait.

15:56 Yeah, for me it's around twenty.

15:58 ADITYA (?) Okay.

15:59 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah, it's forty here for me too.

16:01 Oh my goodness.

16:05 Fantastic difference. [?]

16:06 ADITYA (?) The next question. Sorry.

16:08 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Next question who else could have been part of the show?

16:16 ADITYA (?) Is that a question to me or to the

16:20 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Anybody jump in. All of you. Yeah, anybody.

16:22 Quick about it.

16:23 Yeah, we're not going to be able to do that.

16:26 MRIGANKA I think I would have invited ruangrupa from Indonesia.

16:30 ADITYA (?) Okay.

16:32 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Well

16:32 Why do you think they were not part of the show?

16:35 ADITYA Purely logistical reasons. No, actually I wanted to bring some more from actually Indonesia I've not done research from Manila, but I could not because I think I could not manage to get in touch with them in time. So that's something that's unfortunate. But it's okay there's always a next time.

16:55 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Okin, who else do you think could have been part of this show?

17:00 OKIN Yeah, so we me and other and two other the members will be there.

17:10 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT No, other than the collectives that were part of the show, d do you think some other collectives that you know might have fitted into the show well? Would they have suited the exhibition? Could you think of anybody?

17:26 OKIN Actually

17:31 [unclear]

17:44 It's do you know is a Part-time Suite in Korea?

17:50 ADITYA So there's a it's a collective of two women. It's called Part-time Suite.

17:55 OKIN Yeah, this starts for under three members from now it's two.

17:58 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah.

17:59 ADITYA (?) Very interesting.

18:03 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Okay. Okay. the next question. Who was the first person to hear about this show from you?

18:19 ADITYA Okin, go ahead.

18:31 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT I don't remember.

18:34 ADITYA (?) All right.

18:37 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Who do you think it could have been?

18:42 Excuse me. [?]

18:45 ADITYA (?) That's a different question.

18:51 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Okay.

18:54 [unclear]

18:56 About who's the first person you told this show to?

19:01 OKIN No, because it's not it, yeah.

19:05 ADITYA (?) Apart from apart from both of us, I think they're asking.

19:08 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah.

19:14 OKIN Actually sa I don't hear the exact question from you, so

19:18 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT When you heard about the show

19:21 -huh.

19:21 Whom did you tell first? Who was the first person you went and shared the news with?

19:28 OKIN (?) In our group you mean

19:30 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT In general.

19:30 In general, it could be in your family, in your group, who was the first person to hear about it?

19:37 OKIN Actually we shared the email, so maybe at the same time.

19:43 ADITYA (?) Oh, all of you read it at the same time. That's interesting.

19:45 OKIN Yeah.

19:48 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Okay.

19:48 Okay, th then I'll move on. who is the first person you ever collaborated with on a work project?

19:59 OKIN In you mean in the in the beginning?

20:01 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah, like in your

20:02 I don't remember.

20:05 OKIN Because we you know our collective is very natural the start. So at in the first we

20:16 Doesn't have any kind of this kind this name as collective. We just work together very naturally. And then after then the latest we just decide the name of the old collective. So

20:30 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT But what about in your personal life? Like who was the very first person you ever worked with outside, even before?

20:37 Before okay.

20:38 OKIN (?) Different direction.

20:40 I had as one artist group, like artist for the Atel [?]. So we start I have also one colleague. We just started two person.

20:54 For the group but I think

21:01 A teph [?] for artists this is the name of the group.

21:05 ADITYA (?) Okay.

21:07 OKIN And then we just share the technical things which with the other artists, that's the purpose. huh. Why we made this group. But this group is gone now.

21:20 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Okay.

21:21 Okay.

21:21 Okay.

21:23 MRIGANKA (?) Yeah, much before actually coming into arts, I was into you know, science research.

21:29 Mm.

21:29 So I collaborated with one of my friends for a like a project. That was the first time I collaborated and like you know like a that you know you know in a like a collaborative project.

21:45 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT All right.

21:47 Okay fifth question is how many exhibitions do you successfully avoid in a year?

22:01 MRIGANKA (?) That's a ve that's a very good question. Yeah, I like this question.

22:04 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So you can go ahead and answer it.

22:08 MRIGANKA So I think I think lots because I think I don't have a count but usually more than six, seven, yeah, that's how you don't want to and it has been increasing because you don't f see the point of just being part of and you don't see the things. It's I think it is all based on conversations. So some of the exhibitions which doesn't have any thing of conversation, it's like a ritual. So it you tend to you tend to avoid it. So you are you don't think that you are fit. It's not a judgment, but it is also you don't see that you belong there. So in a sense like even other how other people are saying it is also like it is very hard to do what we do. So it is the very you have to choose. You cannot do because very little time is there. So you cannot do everything.

23:00 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Okay.

23:01 OKIN Yeah, it's a lot.

23:06 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT All right.

23:08 OKIN Because there here is so many exhibitions and then we heard we have we heard so many suggests for to join the exhibition.

23:19 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah.

23:20 Yeah.
23:21 You know.
23:22 Happy to miss them?
23:24 OKIN No well it's just the gone.
23:29 OKIN (?) Why I have us to think about that?
23:34 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah.
23:34 That's true.
23:35 ADITYA (?) They don't exist, so
23:38 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Okay. the last question in the rapid fire is are you having a good time?
23:47 OKIN Good time in where
23:50 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Right now
23:51 Yeah.
23:52 OKIN (?) Yes.
23:54 You know, we are where we are.
23:59 OKIN (?) Yeah, it's pretty busy, but I'm happy.
24:04 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Okay.
24:05 OKIN That's all.
24:05 Like I just you know, so I went to this Delhi and I met as many people.
24:13 This is kind of what we have. Yeah.
24:16 MRIGANKA (?) And since you guys have initiated this, are you guys having a good time?
24:21 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah, we're having a good time. Thank you.
24:24 Yeah, I think we are collectively trying to figure what it is that we would like to talk about as a group.
24:36 So yeah, we I think fishing we are fishing for conversation threads.
24:42 Mm.
24:43 Which is always fun.
24:45 Yeah.
24:47 So I think we'll move to the next question, which will be a longer question, and it is when you meet with your collective, how much of yourself personally do you bring into the room?
25:05 So what part of you stays outside and what do you bring into the room when you meet with your collective?
25:13 OKIN So actually sa I didn't think about this question until now.
25:23 But I'm just to bring my whole things to meet my colleague, you know.
25:29 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So you bring your entire self
25:31 OKIN (?) Yeah, actually I don't want to separate
25:36 Myself to from the o collective, you know.
25:40 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT That's very interesting. is that how it was right from the beginning or is that something that you realized after you started working with the collective?
25:51 OKIN You know I also doing this my private work.
25:56 But at the same time, yeah, you have to think about the collective.
26:02 But yeah, of course as I heard as many questions.
26:08 They like you.
26:11 So people d the question is like so what is the different private and collective things?
26:20 OKIN (?) Mm. Yes.
26:22 But it's really hard to answer.
26:27 But you know, it's my private works is totally different than my the co the collective works. I mean the theme and materials and the expression theme way, you know.
26:41 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah.

26:43 OKIN But at the same time I can say that it's not different or same because it's really hard to separate from separate me and collective.

26:58 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So you seem to have a clear distinction between your own practice outside of the collective, yes. That is separate.

27:06 OKIN Yeah.

27:07 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT But then when you're in the collective, there is a different personality altogether. Is that what you're saying?

27:14 OKIN Because Okin Collective just following the what is the important issue in our society. - huh. So personally I have I the also the I have to think about that question personally, you know? Yeah. So that position is the same, I think.

27:33 OKIN (?) Interesting.

27:35 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT But even when you're dealing with those questions I'm

27:41 Own private practice might influence or feed ideas that you may work with as a collective or whether the what you do as a collective somehow finds a way of getting into your personal practice.

27:57 Yeah how do you figure where to place the boundaries? So as in what is the personal and what is the collective? Because in that sense something that you're thinking about personally when you're interacting with the collective, you might want to I don't know, do you also feel like sharing what you are thinking about personally because or do you think that's personal? I mean some j so I think it'll be interesting to talk about just yeah, what boundaries, how do you place boundaries and do these boundaries exist?

28:32 OKIN Well, some

28:37 OKIN (?) I think I just tried to continue the my thinking.

28:44 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So you don't place boundaries in that sense.

28:46 OKIN There is the boundary somehow, you know. B but we just control each other to make final something, you know. There is so many talking and thinking, you know. I think that is the process but we have to decide something for final things.

29:10 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So there is a

29:11 OKIN Thinking is not separate at all. It's totally mixed in my the personal and the collective.

29:22 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Inside the collective. Yeah. What about you, Mriganka?

29:27 MRIGANKA Yeah, so for me I think the thing is like, you know, I personally feel that you know collective or things like that is how we interpret it is like it has been like a you know organism. It is not like it is a challenging and I think the first thing what is over the years what we have understood is that you need space for difference because I think that is the thing. And it is not either or. It is that either you are bringing yourself or your collective is the thing. It is and always and not or. And it reminds me of a very interesting you know, book of Jean-Luc Nancy's. It's called Being Singular and Plural [?]. So somewhere the singularity and the collectivity, it is it is it of kind of connected, so you cannot leave the one thing like into the day-to-day life, what I do to survive and what I do when I bring myself into the thing, you cannot s keep that outside the door. So there definitely that's why there has to be space for difference. And I think the it's quite a struggle. It's quite a you know and that's also what makes it interesting and dynamic that you have a you can grow. Otherwise it can be a dead organism. It is can be dead like you know so somewhere you are always have constant you know challenges to go out of yourself or go outside of the collectivity and able to re-evaluate. So you know so that this kind of conversations keeps happening. So difference is for us difference is very important.

31:12 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Is this something that you discuss within the collective or is that something that's just understood that a personality development happens?

31:20 MRIGANKA No, it comes out. I think you cannot like I think even if you want it to be very control conversation, but somewhere the sequence because of the personalities are different or

there is a personal growth. Similarly, there is a you know, also a growth of a collectivity. So somewhere both are going parallel. So somewhere so it is as I said in the beginning that I see the collective as a organism. So it is it is coming up with different challenges. So how to coexist. So in that sense.

31:56 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah, it's because the organism is growing and the parts of the organism are also is growing and eventually everything influences each other.

32:05 MRIGANKA Exactly. So it is it is it's a tough kind of a thing. So otherwise you can stop the growth and say we agree to each other, and this is like a so that can be something which is kind of you know very liberal economy or a kind of capitalism in some sense that you are controlling your growth and distribution, the thing. So it is it is crazy process. It's a crazy process because you are also living an economic life, social life, your you know, biological life. So somewhere, how do you bring all of this? it's and most of this thing doesn't come out in exhibitions that of the that personal side of artist or collective or anything that what goes behind what goes behind in producing and I think it is in some sense is also the title of the exhibition is also quite you know it's it is in sync In the Presence of Others. So in some sense it's the other is more important. In some sense it is as I said, it is and it is not either or, it is it has to be both.

33:10 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Right. Now thing that is curious to me is do you feel that there is any value in vocalizing such type of questions within the collective for you personally, within your collective

33:21 MRIGANKA Yes. Yes. I think it is very important. Otherwise it's going to be unhealthy and repression in the sense that repression of that okay, just to and many a times that we have taken risk of that, okay. If this we have this conversation, we might not have some commonalities that we might hurt our individuality. But it is that is the stake you take because otherwise why you choose to work together. And like I have I have never worked as an individual, to be very frank. I've never like even in my when I was in science, I never worked alone. I always like work together with kind of and I it makes me nervous to work alone and like you know, so I kind of see that. there is that there is some kind of connectors which is that and I see as a productive thing. I don't see that okay, that is because I'm scared to get alienated. I don't want to be, you know.

34:21 Right.

34:22 MRIGANKA (?) That disconnected.

34:24 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah, makes sense, makes sense.

34:26 But then do you see it as a kind of role play which becomes in a way a part of, you know, like conventional behaviour, like a general behaviour, common behaviour. Like it does it become a part of you, the kind of role play.

34:46 MRIGANKA So that is what I'm trying to break, the role play. That's what I'd say that I don't want to play any role. So that's where because the organism, the collective organism wants to grow in a certain way. So you don't play that role. You have to it's keep changing. It is the becoming, it is constantly becoming something. So ten years back, what the urgencies or angst which has led us or anybody to so it can it may not be the same. So there has to be the space for the change. Otherwise, you know, I would be like a corporate agent who are who are feeding out and taking out some glossy objects or films and you know, I'm just sh handing out to people. So I don't see that why am I doing what I am doing. So I am I should be able to allow that even if it is uncomfortable, that the thing of the scope of the change, it should be allowed.

35:42 ADITYA But I think it's also the relationship between somewhere the idea of disagreement and consensus in collective spaces. Because at least because I as I understand usually conversation b begin with like disagreements of some conceptual and material kinds and then at the end you come to a kind of a common consensus. And then that is a very I for me personally, at least watching some collectives very closely in the process is what is very fascinating because how can actually the process of disagreement towards contents consensus work? Where you have a point but it's not the ultimate point. There is a kind of an not a solidarity might not be a word,

a kind of a common understanding, okay, this is the right way to maybe present this idea or right way to present this particular kind of show, etc.

36:35 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT I mean so the in that sense are you talking about a kind of fluid kind of leadership structure? So in that sense there is no fixed role there are no fixed roles to be played in terms of who is going to be doing what kind of like who's going to be pushing the conversation which direction and which way. But it's a it's a s kind of it's a set of roles that keeps emerging in different conversations.

37:07 ADITYA It's also the idea of inter interjection, for instance, as a method. Like for example, the it's not it's not complementing w whatever everybody else is saying. It's the idea of interjecting, not just to break the momentum of what somebody else saying, it's also what Mriganka was saying is also and also. So yes, you're saying a particular thing and then I try to interlace or interject with it with a particular idea. So then what happens is that then interjection becomes this really interesting process through which maybe a third kind of thing emerges in conversation. But if it happens once in a while it's a different thing, but it happens on a daily basis, then the dynamic is very different.

37:49 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah, that makes sense. And to interject the next question at this point.
37:54 Yeah, so I'm I'm in that sense guessing so in the s Okin, you actually managed to see the exhibition and Mriganka, did you also manage to visit?

38:06 OKIN (?) Yeah. I saw the exhibition.
38:08 OKIN (?) Yeah, we did.

38:10 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So that kind of punctures that question because the first question was how do you evaluate an exhibition that you haven't visited?

38:22 ADITYA (?) I think that's.

38:23 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Talk about it as a idea.
38:25 About it maybe in the in the context of some other ex exhibition experience that you might have been a part of in which you didn't actually visit the exhibition but you had a work in it and how do you evaluate what actually happened in the exhibition experience without actually having been there?

38:50 OKIN (?) Yeah, well
38:59 Yeah, maybe I need some time to feel what is the evaluate from the exhibition.
39:12 Because we just checked exhibition.
39:20 But you know it's a exhibition is just going on now.
39:24 So we can't gather any feedback from the exhibition from in Delhi, you know?
39:31 But I can say we have many kind we many different abilities.
39:40 The about the Delhi, New Delhi.

39:51 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So you're saying you did not have or you there isn't there hasn't been enough of a time yet to form a complete picture of it, is that what you're saying?

40:00 OKIN Yeah, so yeah we maybe we could the arrive before the opening.

40:10 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Huh.

40:12 OKIN (?) There are many they can bring as many different ways to make the exhibition.

40:23 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT But we missed that time.
40:25 Mm.

40:27 OKIN So I just
40:32 OKIN (?) It's a little bit hard to yeah talk about that things.

40:37 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Okay.
40:39 But supposing there was an exhibition that you s imagine that you couldn't go to Delhi, supposing you could not go to Delhi at all how would you have been able to evaluate this exhibition?

40:59 OKIN Well usually we just try to talk with the curator about the show. Because we can check the what is the condition of the exhibition and what is the feedback of the exhibition from the people.

41:16 So the after the show or the in the exhibition

41:24 We just try to talk with the curators.

41:27 MRIGANKA (?) Okay.

41:29 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT But is the do you think the curator is able to maybe share an independent you know perspective of the experience? because in logically a curator would always have a interest in having a positive perspective of the experience. Like yeah, it was all good.

41:56 ADITYA Well, I don't say always good things.

42:00 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Well there's also this thing for a curator, whoever is putting up the show, they have they have been working with it so closely for so long. whereas when you do get to see the exhibition either for yourself or through another source, you get another perspective of what that exhibition offers as an experience. So and that's where the question comes from. How are we able to access that kind of or the multiple perspectives of these the experience that an exhibition can offer? You can even maybe log in if the exhibition is online and see a show or something. No, that's exactly.

42:42 ADITYA That's exactly the idea. The idea the analysis of what exhibition as a form can achieve.

42:50 He's only made a opinion today reading it online. I just wrote a response to Shanghai Biennale by purely online sources, thinking that ha it will actually produce a different kind of narrative, maybe a similar narrative that is a very different kind of take one could take. But the significant amount of exhibitions today we see, especially the important ones in the world or the big ones, so to speak, are mostly online because of whatever reasons. Even when you're an artist who are part of the show, not always you go and see the exhibition for whatever reasons. I'm not saying only because you can't go or whatever. So there are opinions of course curator becomes the way in which you under try to un make sense of the exhibition about what other artists are there, etcetera. But at the same time for a curator Or like somebody who's in the curating field, the way you judge exhibitionist form [?] is through mainly through Instagram or like all the social media circulation that happens.

43:53 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So as a one a skill set that a curator must have today is digital marketing. Absolutely.

44:00 The presentation online. Like it looks like there is a different meta dimension now to physical exhibitions because this used to not be the case before, right? Like when you there wasn't this kind of a digital access.

44:11 There was an understanding that what happens on the ground happens on the ground. Exactly. That's it.

44:16 Yeah.

44:17 So but so Aditya would you in that sense agree that you need to wear a digital marketer's hat also now?

44:26 ADITYA I don't know. I don't know about the digital market because you know I'm very wary of using market as a thing even though it is actually what it is. But the point is exhibition ha also demands a digital life today for it to circulate beyond what the its immediate audience are.

44:45 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT That's one thing, but the second thing is also that as a curator you had a vision for what was physical. But if that vision is not translated into what is being shown digitally, that may be out of your out of the curator's control, right? So that's perhaps something to keep in mind.

45:00 ADITYA Yeah, for sure. Because pi the way most of the exhibition engagement of the audience, especially in a Biennale context, works, they want to take selfies in the artworks.

45:09 Mm.

45:10 Which is a one of the most popular way of engaging with the artworks, especially of spectacular nature today. But you can say that is one of the ac most active engagements, but you can also say that is not actually serving the purpose of the artwork. So there can be multiple readings of what you can or cannot value and not value in terms of an online engagement.

45:32 ADITYA (?) Yeah.

45:34 ADITYA (?) W what are the kids? Where are the kids from? I'm hearing kids in the background.

45:43 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT No, maybe through

45:45 Are they here?

45:46 ADITYA I don't know. I you're school kids in the background or like

45:50 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT They logged in to provide for us a fork [?].

45:54 Ambient environment. Yeah, that's the ambient environment.

45:59 ADITYA Okay, let's move on to the next question. Is there next question?

46:02 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah, I don't know if Mriganka wanted to answer sorry question.

46:07 MRIGANKA No, I think regarding this, I think the f I would respond by saying that like the present avatar of digital, I'm not it's very flat for me even to evaluate an exhibition. It is not either by writing or, you know, if I'm not there or just by even what you saying the whole danger of digital marketing or any kind of thing. So I would say somebody like there are many instances where I have not been able to go there. So I would ask somebody who is not an artist or who is not connected to any of this thing and he or she has visited, I would like to listen to their impressions. That is

46:54 Sure.

46:54 I do something I like to listen to, at which kind of kind of you know, in a g kind of a game narrative in some sense. You can say.

47:03 Yeah.

47:03 How they how they are receiving that because otherwise exhibition is if you are within the fraternity it is a kind of mechanism i think it is it is self-operating it is kind of op operating for itself so somewhere very rarely and very rare you know the lot of the signals could go out and you know and can be received by very different by varied group of people so for me that is I like to first thing is that it can be like very interesting people very unobvious people coming and talking about something which is very you know interesting like I remember as an odd as a viewer I understand how I told about I don't remember which version of Berlin Biennale which was very powerful which was it didn't look like an exhibition so it was the impression which is So I think still, you know, like I think it is not possible for us to travel, but somewhere if there is something as this what you guys are doing, it if like some of the exhibition can create a kind of interface which can address how to represent an exhibition or how to you know, maybe that is the way, but if the present thing I find it very flat, just images, selfies and somebody praising or somebody writing critical kind of thing. I don't see a I don't I can't I can't evaluate. It's difficult.

48:37 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Interesting. Yeah, actually it's funny because just a few days ago even within Surfatial we were discussing the same thing what you said of somebody who's not an artist by prof you know, as they identify. as Malavika you had mentioned.

48:54 OKIN But as I have some question about this answer the question, you know? But what is the difference in between the didn't visit the exhibition and do visit?

49:13 ADITYA (?) Sorry, can you say it again?

49:14 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT The difference between visiting and not visiting the exhibition.

49:19 OKIN The what is the difference?

49:23 OKIN (?) Yeah, for example, we just visited Delhi, right? Why?

49:27 But that is the just the moment, you know.

49:30 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Well.

49:30 OKIN We cannot stay all the time.

49:32 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. It's not like you're there twenty four seven all the time sitting there and

49:39 OKIN (?) Yeah. The I think it's work is just the learning itself.

49:46 ADITYA That's an interesting dimension to even if you're visiting, you're visiting in a particular moment and there are many moments where you're not there.

49:55 OKIN (?) Yeah, yes.

49:56 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah, the artworks are standing on their own all the time anyway. Yeah.

50:00 You know.

50:01 But which also brings into question the appearance of having visited something some place, some exhibition. So like Malavika, like we had done the Facebook trip to Kutch

50:15 Yes, yeah.

50:16 A few years back. So that was you know, so we just posted photographs and videos of having done something but we didn't actually do it. And that of course has its own currency. like it's so easy to create the kind of the illusion of participation in of s in something without actually, you know, doing it.

50:40 -huh.

50:42 Yeah.

50:42 It's a kind of playful imagination also, where in some ways I see it almost like a virtual experience where you don't visit something, and I'm not talking in terms of online experience, but even when you imagine something, you have all the data and information about a space or a city or an event, and for whatever reason you haven't been able to go to it, and yet you put together pieces in your own head that still makes it real for you, and you can imagine that you have had some experience of it through your own imagination.

51:21 Yeah, this yeah, makes sense. I'm just reminded of a song by Jamiroquai, Travelling Without Moving. So it's like I'm there without being there.

51:33 So let's go to the last question because we're almost near the end of our time. So what is missing in your life and why is it missing?

51:53 MRIGANKA I think for me, I think what I also in our in the studio we talk about this but somewhere personally for me I think I miss somewhere like a community.

52:07 I'm twenty. [?]

52:07 When I'm talking about community, I'm also talking about online or offline or even like a tangible community, which is I think is missing from my life. And why is it missing is somewhere? I don't know, like as I said in the beginning that there is a whole tendency that like a whole thing of you know considering every action as a part of a group or as a community or commune. So I am I am feeling that it is more and more in the neoliberal sense we are being separated from the thing. So there is all the time you are using different mediations or technologies to kind of but it is I think it is more alienating in some sense. So somewhere I think to bring in the idea of community and I it is not only an interface. I think it is more than an interface. I think it is it is missing from my life and I crave that somewhere like in one of our projects what was idea was to bring together various different kind of communities and trying to create but to sustain a community it is very different it is very difficult and it is very you know like to you know keep it so I miss that. I think I miss that in my life.

53:26 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Do you feel like it has changed over the decades, like over the past decades? Like has there been more of an age, yes. No

53:34 MRIGANKA I think when I one of my strongest impressions is that whatever I'm able to think or I'm doing is because of a community life. So and that is the reason I'm located where I'm located, because somewhere I have a memory of that, and I am a product of that community living. Yeah. So whatever I have, the books has been passed on, or what kind of a thing. So over last 30, 25 years, I see that it is going, it is a kind of a deconstruction, it is kind of a disintegrating thing. And I'm constantly trying that even through, and that's also one I'm thinking that to whenever we are trying to you know think through something, it is to connect. So it is not a

spectacle or it is not an attention I'm trying to create in front of somebody. But somewhere like somebody is coming and having a conversation or something is so that is the biggest you know asset or as or kind of impetus for making art. I don't see that you know it is for me personally it is not because I have a day job, so I don't do it for money, I don't do it really, so I don't want to do it for money. That is I want to keep it really so that is missing that which is I'm looking for even in like even general life, not only art like artistic. I don't so it is kind of alienating even and the whole thing, the way it operates, because you cannot separate any of your actions and your activity from the global functioning of things. So even if you know try to work with any of your things but you cannot separate from economy and this kind of a thing. So somewhere it is always a competition or the division of labor and then you have to segregate yourself from everybody else and you have to feel alienated. So that's what I see that it is none of those things is able to bring together people or it is that things. you know.

55:46 ADITYA Shiu Jin.

55:47 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Would like to

55:50 OKIN (?) Yes it's just yeah, it's a lot.

55:55 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah.

55:56 OKIN (?) I understand there's so many things. But I don't want to s use that word missing.
56:04 Because it's also very natural. So I can say it's just let it go.

56:10 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Interesting. Yeah. Yeah. That's a great approach.

56:13 OKIN (?) Here I have to use into missing some
56:18 OKIN (?) Missing almost six years in my young age.
56:28 It's mean it's like I don't remember the what happened in
56:34 OKIN (?) In the specific at my age, y young agey, it's like from eight to the twelfth.

56:47 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Mm.

56:49 OKIN Because as my mom was so sick.

56:52 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Mm-

56:53 OKIN So I have to stay with mom. Yeah. At that time so I l I missed this many things. It's like the news from outside. And I don't have any friends that time.
57:08 And yeah, I can I can't remember as many things from that moment.

57:15 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT That's very

57:16 OKIN (?) I can say there is the missing from my life, you know.

57:21 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT That's a poignant note, yeah.

57:26 OKIN (?) But yeah. Other thing is yeah, very naturally just gone.
57:32 OKIN (?) Yeah, but the
57:34 The many things it comes up, so
57:39 No.
57:40 OKIN (?) It's my answer.

57:41 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah no makes a lot of sense, yeah. What are you missing, Ad Aditya?

57:47 ADITYA I'm missing Delhi and food.
57:53 ADITYA (?) Actually I'm fine, I should not complain. I mean

57:58 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah.

57:59 ADITYA (?) Anyway, that's very good. I th sorry, what are you saying?

58:03 MRIGANKA No, I'm saying about everybody, what other people are missing. I just

58:07 ADITYA Malavika, Prayas, Satya.

58:10 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT I'm missing patience.
58:14 Yeah. I keep feeling that I'm running out of it all the time.
58:19 Oh.

58:24 Yeah, I mean for me personally l like it has been a constant process of negotiating for meaning in what is projected or and you know what is for us like artistic activity or whatever. And it's not at this point it's not enough for it something to be to for something to have artistic value. It needs to have some meaning beyond that. And I think for me

58:58 Yeah.

58:58 That's what I'm missing.

59:01 Yeah.

59:02 Satya.

59:04 I'm so put on the spot right now. But what I'm missing is being able to focus on a top [?] subject like reading, for example. If I'm reading a book, I used to be able to like sit and read it for a long stretch of time and now my attention is fragmented and I don't like that. I'm missing the time when it wasn't so fragmented.

59:25 OKIN (?) Mm.

59:27 ADITYA (?) So there was this job offer the other day. There was this job offer the other day which is basically for someone to stay in this place which has no Wi Fi connection.

59:39 Yeah.

59:39 And it's actually in a lamp post but it has like stain [?], but you have to stay there for like six months.

59:45 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Mm-

59:46 ADITYA And it's like I think initiative by the government because the life is going extinct in that particular region.

59:53 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT In India.

59:54 ADITYA No, it's somewhere I think in New Zealand or somewhere.

59:57 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Oh okay, I'll apply then.

01:00:00 Do it. [?]

01:00:01 Okay.

01:00:03 Berlin is as good, come on.

01:00:05 Yeah, that's true. Yeah.

01:00:08 ADITYA TK [?], I think

01:00:11 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah.

01:00:12 ADITYA Last comments, how much more time we have?

01:00:15 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Yeah, I think we are nearly done with our bana [?], but on just to in that sense yeah, introduce our next date and hope as many of us can join in then and m maybe more of us can join on eleventh April. So next conversation is on eleventh.

01:00:40 ADITYA (?) Yeah, on the eleventh, yes.

01:00:42 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT So

01:00:43 New set of members.

01:00:46 Yeah. Well thanks, Okin and Mriganka, for joining.

01:00:50 OKIN Yeah, thank you so much. Thank you guys.

01:00:52 SURFATIAL ACCOUNT Thank you.

01:00:54 Thank you.

01:00:54 Bye.

01:00:55 Right.

01:00:55 Yeah.

01:00:56 ADITYA (?) But