

CASE STUDY FOUR:
SCOTLAND AND

INDIA

KOCHI INSPIRED BY THE
NATION'S VISUAL ARTS TALENT

For Bose Krishnamachari, Founding Director of Kochi-Muziris Biennale (KMB), India's first major visual arts biennale, taking part in Momentum 2015 provided an inspiring introduction to the Edinburgh Art Festival (EAF) and the wider visual arts sector in Scotland. In turn, EAF, alongside several Scottish curators, galleries and artists, connected with the significant profile of this influential Indian showcase. It also helped align their ambitions with the British Council's major cultural exchange programme between the UK and India in 2017.

The impact has been significant. In addition to an acclaimed Scottish presence at the 2016 KMB, new international opportunities emerged. A Scottish visual arts delegation visited Kochi and went on to develop five projects, collaborating not just with Indian partners but also with each other to extend the reach of their work.



ORIGINS

The Momentum partnership worked with EAF to invite Bose as one of ten delegates on the 2015 programme. KMB is an ambitious, artist-curator led, emerging biennale operating on a previously unseen scale. Having little prior knowledge of Scotland's visual arts sector, Bose took part in meetings and discussions with Scottish curators, galleries and artists. His perceptions were transformed and he was keen on engaging further.

'We were really interested in Kochi-Muziris as a young biennale that was having a major impact, in a city with a strong heritage context that had an interesting approach to using buildings. We also wanted to act as an entry point to Kochi for Scottish artists and organisations, and to share our art festival as a model of practice in itself.'

Sorcha Carey, Director, EAF

The wider delegation not only discovered the Scottish visual art sector, they also connected with each other. Time was put aside for them to present their own projects and organisations, and to engage with the range of international work on display at EAF.

'It was not just that they were discovering Scotland but also, within the group, there was a whole range of international relationships being built in the context of the unique melting pot in Edinburgh at that moment, and of our art festival and Momentum as a global cultural platform.'

Sorcha Carey

By the end of his visit, Bose was committed to exploring a showcase of Scottish art at the 2016 KMB. His participation in Momentum had revealed a new platform for wider engagement and exchange between the Scottish and Indian arts sectors. Bose had gone from having low awareness of the Scottish visual arts scene to being its champion.

'The country has grown this extraordinary pool of talent. It hosts one of the most sought-after art festivals like 'The Fringe' and has one of the finest art schools like Glasgow School of Art. In the last two decades, Scotland has been the absolute leader in contemporary art. I have been travelling quite a bit in recent times and I realised that if you go to London or New York or Berlin or Hong Kong, people know about what's happening in Scotland. It has both its feet in the future.'

Bose Krishnamachari, writing in The Week, 5 February 2017

FOLLOW-UP AND DELIVERY

The impact of Bose's Momentum experience was almost immediate.

'We found out that Kochi-Muziris had selected not just one but four artists. We never imagined that would happen and were delighted, as the opportunity was significant for each of them. It provided the right platform at the right moment.'

Juliet Dean, Visual Arts Advisor Scotland, British Council

A Scottish showcase idea developed quickly. The four artists chosen – Hanna Tuulikki, Jonathan Owen, Charles Avery and Rachel Maclean – represented the diversity and strength of Scotland's contemporary visual arts sector. The artists made the most of their involvement through additional events, which further highlighted the strengths of their home sector and created opportunities for exchanging ideas and practices.

'SOURCEMOUTH: LIQUIDBODY was my first public project outside the UK at a major biennale, introducing my work to international curators and a global audience. The development of this project has propelled my practice into new territories, expanding my skill set and developing my vocabulary as a visual artist, composer and performer.'

Hanna Tuulikki

A further opportunity came with a British Council-led delegation of Scottish curators who attended the opening of KMB. The event acted as a vibrant hub for the Indian visual art sector and media, and the delegates were able to develop their networks and relationships, advocate for the Scottish sector, and explore opportunities for their respective organisations.

'As well as engaging with the Biennale itself, it was clear that KMB was a meeting place for people from elsewhere in South-east Asia and the rest of the world. I took the opportunity to reach out to other Indian organisations and individuals in advance of the trip. Visiting several of the venues for the Students' Biennale was also highly memorable. I now have a deeper understanding of the realities of art education and artists' practice in India, and can connect with existing knowledge to develop projects.'

Laura Simpson, Programme Manager, Hospitalfield

LEGACIES

The impact has been remarkable. At the time of writing, five projects were in development and a shared spirit of collaboration has been invested into projects across Scotland.

'Since returning from Kochi we have screened Shirley Abraham and Amit Madheshiya's film The Cinema Travellers, which featured as part of the biennale. The screening formed part of ATLAS's 2017 artistic programme, exploring connections between Gaelic and Indian culture. Along with Grampian Hospitals Arts Trust and Chapter Thirteen, we have also been supported by the British Council to invite artists from Camp Collective in Mumbai for a professional development meeting in Scotland.'

Emma Nicolson, Director, ATLAS Arts

'There are wonderful projects in development between Scottish and Indian partners as a result of the delegation to Kochi. The four artists who were presented at the Kochi Biennale have extended their profile and reach, and generated attention for the Scottish visual arts sector.'

Sorcha Carey

LINKS

Kochi-Muziris Biennale
www.kochimuzirisbiennale.org

Edinburgh Art Festival
www.edinburghartfestival.com

British Council UK/India 2017
<https://uk-india.britishcouncil.in>