

# Nandita Palchoudhuri

Consultant-Curator of Indian folk art, craft and performances



## **Nandita Palchoudhuri**

Works as a Consultant-Curator with Indian Folk Practices in the Visual Arts, Crafts and Performances.

Creates cutting edge functional applications using traditional skills to address a contemporary social need. Explores the possibility of Art to reexamine the old and create new relationships between social engagement and aesthetic gesture.

This process helps to regenerate the craft as well as provide sustainable livelihood for the artisan.

## **Positions held**

- **Independent Consultant -Curator of Indian Folk Art, Craft and Performances**  
[www.nanditapalchoudhuri.in](http://www.nanditapalchoudhuri.in)
- **2022-present, Consultant-Atmanirbhar Bharat, Government of India Project, Red Fort, New Delhi**
- **2002-2012 and 2021-present Ex-Chairperson- currently Trustee on the board of the India Foundation for the Arts headquartered in Bangalore.** ([www.indiaifa.org](http://www.indiaifa.org))
- Advisory Board, **Crafting Futures, India, British Council**
- Member - **FICCI-Creative Industries Committee**
- Member - Governing Committee, **Alliance Francaise du Bengale**
- Trustee – **Academy of Fine Arts, Kolkata**
- Member - **International Initiative for Social Philanthropy (Ford Foundation)**
- Member - Governing Committee - **Calcutta School of Music**

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- Trustee - **Neemrana Music Foundation (New Delhi)**
- Member - **Paramparik Karigar, Mumbai**
- 2000 onwards – Member, **Crafts Council of West Bengal**
- **1998-2000:** Secretary, **Crafts Council of West Bengal**
- **1991-1996:** Member, **Crafts Council of West Bengal**
- ❖ **Clore Chevening Scholar in Cultural Leadership-, 2011-2013, UK Government**
- ❖ Invited by the **French Government** to study the **Lyon Festival of Lights** and other
- ❖ **Cultural Institutions in Paris**
- ❖ Invited as Indian Representative to the **Visitors Programme, Berlin, Germany**
- ❖ Trained in **Indian Classical vocal music**, in the Guru-Shishya Parampara by the leading exponent of the Benaras Gharana, Padma Vibhushan. Girija Devi

## **Important Engagements -**

A Speaker at major Conferences, Museums, Literary meets, Debates in India and internationally.

### **2021-present**

- Consultant to a central government project, implemented by the IGNCA, New Delhi to set up an incubation center for Indian GI crafts within Red Fort with responsibility for Sholapith. [www.aatmanignca.org](http://www.aatmanignca.org)

### **2019-present**

- Co Curator with Lucy Tomlins to present Gods Factory ,an International Sculpture project in collaboration between Indian potters in Kumartulli , Pinch Potter Dolon Kundu and 4 British Sculptors to create Giant outdoor installation with cross fertilization of techniques, in 2022 in Coventry, UK.

### **2018-present**

- In a partnership with premium lifestyle aggregator Baro, Mumbai to exhibit annually and sell high end craft-based products resulting from incubation with Craft clusters in the native localities
- Comprehensive Training to artisan Clusters in design, packing, transport, labeling, billing and basic banking.
- Introduction of online selling of crafts to Artisan clusters.

### **2017-present**

- Development of new line of products with Teracotta- Burdwan, Sholapith -3 Clusters, Muslin and Jamdani –Nadia and Kalna , Silver filigree 24 Parganas, Wood carving Natun Gram

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## 2016:

- **Mediator** for the **New Patrons Project** run by Goethe Institute, Germany- based in India
- Invited by Goethe Institute to Weimar, Germany as a Participant Speaker at the
- **Weimar Culture Symposium on the Sharing Economy.**
- Invited by **Pro Helvetia** to Research and produce report on –Handcrafts in a Mature Economy-**Switzerland**
- Speaker at the **Crafts Council of India** National meet

## 2015:

- Consultant to **Jan Sahas** to devise Arts based income generation for freed Manual Scavengers in Madhya Pradesh
- In the process of designing a cross cultural project **(M)otherland with UK**
- partners to engage Indian Diaspora through craft
- Speaker at The Kolkata Literary Festival , National Library, CIMA Talks, Pushpitan International

## 2014:

- Consultant to the **Artsacre Foundation** to set up the largest multiarts facility with a Museum of Bengal Modern Art in India
- Consultant to a **UK Film project** with young artisans of Patachitra practice in Medinipur

## 2013:

- Presented a Collaborative Lights Installation at Jantar Mantar Delhi , for Bonjour India with Patrick Rimoux ,**France and Chandannagar Lights** to commemorate the visit of the **French President**
- Consultant to Dance Theatre Project, 'Dialogues' with **Sasha Waltz and Guests, Germany** at a heritage building site in Kolkata
- Wrote a comprehensive report on cultural institutions in the UK as a basis for the British Council project **Re-imagine** as apart of the Clore-Chevening secondment
- Designing of a transactional English teaching module for artisans ,delivered through a telephone app in collaboration with the British Council and with know how from ITC(UN agency) in Geneva

## 2011:

- Created an Outdoor Installation in collaboration with a Scottish Artist , in Edinburgh during the **Edinburgh Festival made of Shola**. The prime purpose of this exercise was to introduce waterproofing to the delicate raw material in order to expand its end use.

## 2010:

- Invited by the **French Government** to study the **Lyon Festival of Lights** and other **Cultural Institutions in Paris** for future Collaborations.
- Developed a prototype for a **Artisans Chamber of Commerce** with assistance from IBM , USA using West Bengal as a pilot area.
- Initiated a organization in Calcutta "**Anantara**" that presents total site specific cultural entertainment . Have presented Malavika Sarukai on the Hooghly, Anurupa Roy, Navtej Johar against the Calcutta Skyline on a heritage building, Qawali from Nizammuddin Dargah, A rock band in fusion with Folk artists, Odissi within the Govtment Art College etc

## 2009:

- Creating artistic work in Collaboration with French artists using Indian Traditional Techniques for the **India Exhibition, Centre Pompidou 2011**
- Consultant Expert on the board of the **Cultural Mapping Project of the Goethe Institute**
- Invited as Indian Representative to the **Visitors Programme, Berlin**
- Principle consultant **to Kolkata Fashion Week**, for collection of Traditional Bengal Weaves .
- Invited to **Johannesburg ,and Durban, Zululand ,Pmb ,South Africa** to speak on transformation of Traditional Craft into contemporary practice-highlighting the Traditional Scroll painters evolution to Community Health Workers. Supported by ICCR, and the Durban Art Gallery
- Creating knock down Marquee in the traditional Pandals style **for Zoo Lake Johannesburg** as a part of the Shared Histories Festival, 2009

## 2008:

- Signature images of **Durham, UK** incorporated in the traditional Giant Gates that span the roads of Calcutta during the Durga Festival. The Bamboo panels are encrusted with 120,000 hand wrapped bulbs and animated to create a spectacle, unique to Chandannagar in Eastern India. Exhibited as a part of Enlightenment Festival, Nov 2008. Has since won the Best Event-UK award from Arts Journal.

## 2007:

- Design and Implementation of an Arts and Public health project in Medinipur in collaboration with Dr. David Gere of UCLA and the UNESCO and UNAIDS .
- The project uses traditional scroll paintings and accompanying narrative songs as a **communication tool for HIV awareness in rural Bengal** in partnership with health workers.
- Lecture-Presentation at the **CHINA ART ACADEMY** showcasing the shadow puppet forms of India in Hangzhou, China.
- Redesigning the traditional **Pandal building techniques of Bengal** to make knock

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down, transportable versions that can be erected anywhere in the world as PUBLIC ART without involving the transportation of the labour force. This project is in the pipeline with partners in UK

- Co curator at the **MAKE ART STOP AIDS exhibition, opening in Los Angeles** in Feb 2008. It features work from Brazil, South Africa , India and the US and will travel to the 4 regions .
- Invitee at **Ford Foundation** seminar for Impact Assessment of Foundations, in St Petersburg, Russia
- Lecture Demonstration on contemporary installations created by Traditional artisans, using traditional materials in **Auckland and Wellington , New Zealand.**

## 2006:

- Cultural Consultant to **Pina Bausch**, Germany for the creation of Bamboo
- Dreams piece", during her visit to India.
- Scroll painting workshops and lecture- demonstration on the ancient story telling form of Bengal in **Auckland and Wellington ,New Zealand.**
- Designing and creating five 9 ft high ,3 dimensional "Bula di " Mascots for HIV awareness using the Chandannagore Bulb techniques for Durga Puja in **Calcutta** to be viewed by over a million people over 5 days.
- Invitee at Ford Foundation International Initiative for Social Philanthropy meeting, **Dakar, Senegal and Salvador, Brazil**
- Design, Workshop and Implementation of Traditional Scrolls as communication tools for HIV awareness in **Medinipur and Sundarbans** , West Bengal in collaboration with Dr. David Gere, UCLA. USA.

## 2005

- Lecture- demonstration of muslin weaving and sculpture crafts with master craftsmen in **Madrid** ,for CASA ASIA
- Installation in the form of Giant Goddess Kali, and ritual Horse with master artisans in **Barcelona** for CASA ASIA
- Co- Curating an exhibition of HIV related Art works at **UCLA, Los Angeles** with work from USA, South Africa and Brazil and India-opening Dec1st, 2006.
- ecreating the Electric bulb "Bajra", the peacock Boat to be displayed under **Hungerford Bridge by the Thames river,UK.**
- Electric light installation at **Blackpool , UK** to celebrate 125 years of illumination in the Chandannagore style.
- Invitee to Ford Foundation IISP initiative at **Budapest** and **Puerto Rico.**

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## 2004:

- Speaker at the World Aids Day Conference at **UCLA on "Make Arts Stop Aids"**, in **December 2004**
- A two week presentation by **The Giant Animal Puppets of Orissa , in New Zealand** through a proscenium presentation, Walkabout ,and Workshops, in October 2004,supported by ICCR
- Indian representative for the Crafts industry at **Asia Business** week at **Milan, Italy** October 2004 as part of the Government delegation.
- Presenting a project at the **International Seminar on Arts and Aids** supported by the UNAIDS foundation and in partnership with Prof. David Gere, based on Scroll Paintings of Bengal, in July 2004

## 2003:

- Speaker at an **International Conference on access to Heritage and Environment**, .Presented by Interculture, Harewood House, Barbados Museum ,English Heritage
- Speaker at On route-**International Carnival Conference** in **SOAS, London**,
- Speaker at **National Mela Conference** at Bradford, in UK,
- Commissioned to create a Mughal temporary space 24mt x 8 mt x 6mt with the Brodsworth Hall in the backdrop using indigenous **Marquee building techniques of Bengal** using cotton cloth, coir rope and bamboo for the **Chintz Yatra**, UK, August 2003.
- Commissioned to design and create the centre piece for the **Mayor's Thames Festival**, London , a illuminated sculpture in the shape of a 7 mt X 3 mt mythical Boat-Bajra, in September 2003
- A month long Workshops with a traditional artisan for the **Asia Alive** project at the **Asian Art Museum**, in the USA, in Nov,2003. Traditional artisans of India,the trends in craftsmanship and design, will be the primary focus using **SHOLA** sculpture as a medium.
- Co curated the first **Calcutta Carnival** with 150 costumes of the Thames Carnival, London and 500 additional Folk performers and school children, on 14<sup>th</sup> December,2003 with the British High Commission and Kinetika of London.

## 2002:

- In collaboration with an American partner, instituted **a scholarship for 2 women painters** and printmakers to visit Vermont Art Center, USA each year for a month long training programme. This will be a recurring grant.
- Conducted **performances –workshops with Giant Animal Puppets of Orissa** for the
- **Visions International Festival , Brighton UK, October 2002.**
- Performances –Workshops at Belfast for **the Belfast Queens International Festival.**

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- Presented a 4 day seminar-workshop on the **traditional playing cards of India, called Gangifa**, with the last set of surviving artisan-participants from Bengal and Maharashtra at Sawantwadi, near Goa. A panel of specialists, collectors, and designers were present to discuss and generate new ideas regarding the future application of this form.

## 2001:

- A set of **Electric Light Installations** using animated miniature electric bulbs on a bamboo grid in the style of Chandanagore, West Bengal, mounted in **Belfast , N.Ireland in November 2001** ,as a part of the Belfast Festival ,in the Queens Gallery. This is the first initiative to take this outdoor street art to an art form that can be exhibited in a gallery and museum. Several community outreach workshops, and lecture demonstrations were organized by the Queens University.
- In collaboration with **the National Museums of Scotland, in Edinburgh** **extensive workshops** with a group of 5 Indian performers/craft persons October 2001in Edinburgh on the theme of Dushera resulting in the creation of a **40 foot Ravana**.
- A series of Pottery, Block printing/Tie -dye workshops with rural artisans and city children at a premium school in Calcutta. This is part of an initiative to launch an **"experience your heritage "** programme
- **Consultant for a Dutch group**, Planet Junior, to identify talented under privileged children in the field of Dance Music, theatre and other performances to create a collaborative work under an international Art director to tour South Africa, Holland, India etc.
- Development and display of **HIV-Aids Communication tools using traditional folk painting** and music For the American Government for use in rural India.
- Participated in a Workshop -Seminar conducted for Festival managers and Art presenters in April 2001,at Calcutta in collaboration with Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, Visiting Arts -UK, and the British Council.
- Presented the **the opening event of the Kala Ghoda Festival at the National Gallery of Modern Art in Bombay**, in February 2001with 17 Giant Puppets from Eastern India and drummers from Kerela.

## 2000:

- Invited by the Charles Wallace Trust, Visiting Arts and British Council to visit the Edinburgh Festival, to participate in a seminar resulting in India focus activities at the Edinburgh Festivals and at the Manchester Games in 2002.

## 1999:

- Independently organized a 10-day mega-event to present 500 years of rural Bengal in December to celebrate the millenium in conjunction with the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Tata Steel.
- Organized a 7-day exhibition and sale of textiles representing the major weaving

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styles of India

- Coordinated the Nature Bazaar - an exhibition of eco-friendly handicrafts at Delhi aimed at promoting the production and consumption of environmentally healthy products.
- existent in the Upper Hooghly area in the 16th and 17th century with the goal of creating a source of income for the women of the region.

#### 1997:

- Organized **the Philadelphia Exposition** - a presentation that simulated a Bengal village with live artisans and demonstrations of Craft for an American audience, at Philadelphia, USA
- Presented Artisans in Live demonstration and sale of Crafts at the
  - **Philadelphia –Museum of Art**, to commemorate 50 years of Indian Independence

#### 1996:

- Organized Exposition of Crafts of East India with live demonstration by Master Craftspersons, **in Houston, USA**

#### 1995:

- Actively revived authentic modes of traditional embroidery technique of Kantha. Subsequently, a training centre with urban women was set up.
- Coordinated the creative activities of a group of Krishnanagar idol-makers to produce a permanent exhibit for the **Peabody Musuem in Salem, USA.**

#### 1994:

- Participated in Design and Product Development Conference in Kuala Lumpur as an Indian representative. This was a global seminar organized by the **Malaysian Crafts Council**. Promoted Bengal textiles to major European buyers such as Habitat and Liberty, London

#### 1988:

- Toured **Japan** extensively with a group of six Craftspersons representing the lesser known Crafts of India such as Mithila art of Bihar for The **Festival of India**

#### 1987:

- Organized the first ever Fund raiser presenting maestros of Indian Classical music in a theme show for the crafts persons relief fund, Eastern India. Sham –e Avadh,Subh e – Benaras featuring Bismillah Khan,Kishan Maharaj,Giirija Devi,Birju Maharaj etc

#### 1985:

- Toured USA for the **Festival of India** with renowned exponents of Indian Classical music for the Festival of India in the capacity of accompanying vocalist.

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