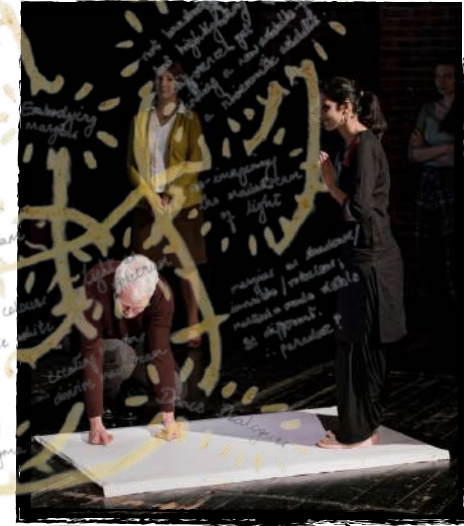
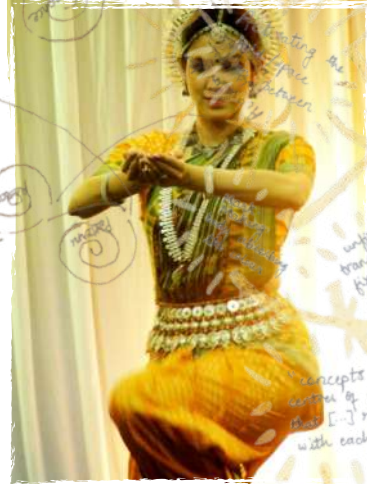


Portfolio



Dr. JANHAVI DHAMANKAR
 Dance | Performance Philosophy | Social
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Introduction

Interweaving dance, Philosophy, Social Sculpture, Dialogical aesthetics, socially engaged art practice, my work explores marginality, stigma and empathy through Artistic Research. Empathy, as a special kind of imaginative act (Edith Stein) is a process that takes place between individuals, making the intersubjective space an evocative terrain for knowledge creation. Akin to a 'stage-hand' (Theron Schdmit), I make possible the conditions for empathy: including preparing the space with warmth materials (with Lara Niuwenhuis), exploring and embodying the space through light and shadows (with Elisabeth Wildling), creating and sensing resonance (with Aboli Dhayarkar) and open hardened ways of thinking, unfix meanings and create new aesthetic responses to others (with Minou Polleros).

My embodied semantic analysis is coupled with socially engages art practice viz. designing empathy-practices to reduce the gap between mainstream society and marginalised communities (e.g. people suffering from stigma against leprosy, dementia, ageism, refugees). These take varied formats from tea-making to postcard-writing, and employ multiple art forms (like drawing, movement, weaving) depending on the inner capacity to be honed, and can be adopted to any conflict situation. Together, the collaborations and work in this portfolio, including classical dance performances and teaching experience, seek to expand our sesnsibilities, sensitivities, challenge the social status quo, flatten hierarchies, open spaces for multiplicities and create a *sahridaya*—someone with a heart, with whom we can have a heart to heart connection.

I. Collaborations—Dialogical aesthetics

a) Socially engaged art/community practice

○ **Anandwan, Warora** (India): Discarded land in the heart of India given to treat leprosy patients (1951), soon became a refuge for all minorities to live a dignified life, under the leadership of Baba Amte. Though their primary aims of awareness and treatment of leprosy have been achieved, rehabilitation of those affected by leprosy in the mainstream society, still remains a dream. Collaborating with Anandwan for my artistic research doctoral project, my empathy-practices sought to infuse empathy in social interactions between Anandwan residents and tourists visiting them from outside—interactions which are otherwise characterised by distance, differences, awe, sympathy or pity. We were able to create spaces for genuine dialogue and rhizomatic interactions to understand each other in a new light and build new, humane relations.



- **Tanz die Toleranz, Vienna** (Austria): Conducted an Art and Empathy Lab in collaboration with Tanz die Toleranz in Vienna which was open to all. The empathy-practices offered included uncovering our own superpowers and relating to that of others; a non-anthropomorphic imagination into the movement of animals; daydreaming to address our biases and prejudices and responding to hate postcards with empathy.



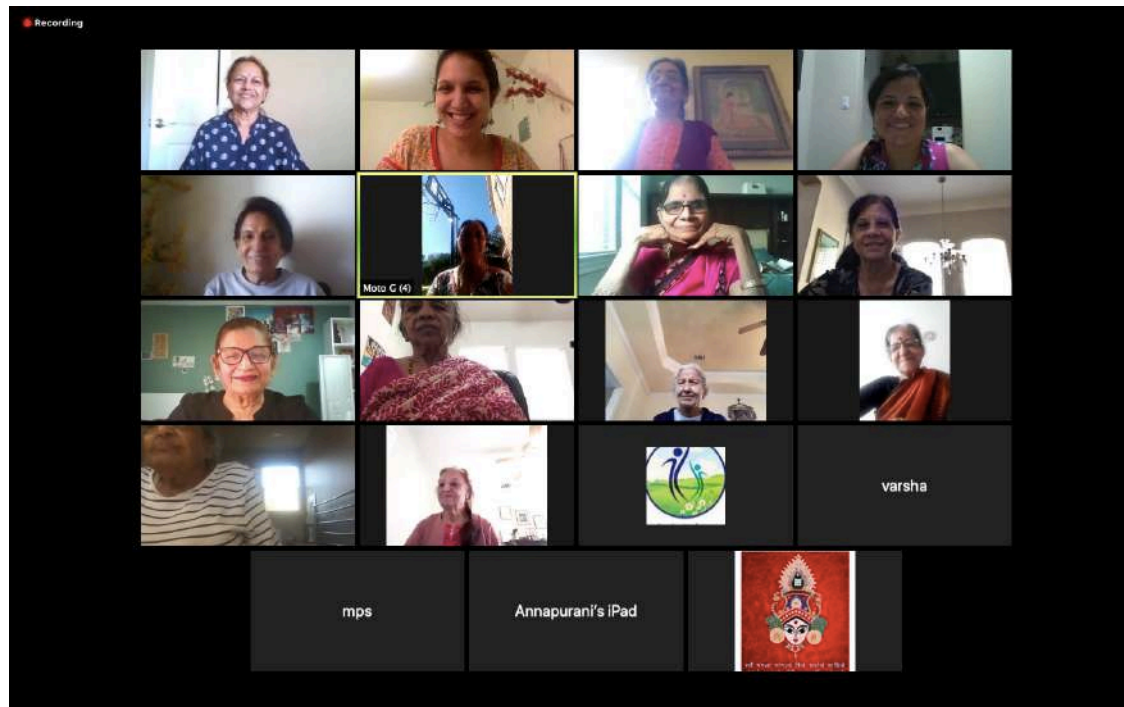
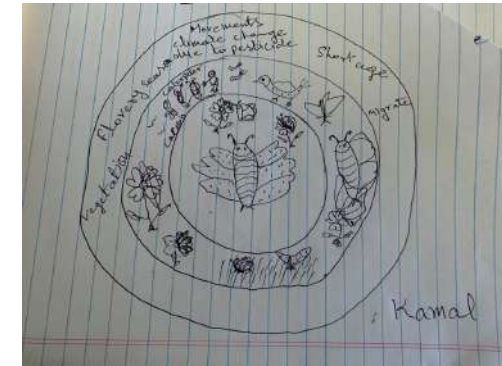
Art and Empathy Lab participants showing their movements for butterfly and other participants guessing (from Austria, South Africa)

- **Volunteer Academy, Amsterdam**, (the Netherlands): Invitation from this organisation which trains and supports volunteers who work with vulnerable people e.g. children from broken homes, to conduct Empathy masterclasses focusing on distinguishing empathy from sympathy, pity; how to practice empathy with the clients; and artistic ways to gain relational knowledge. The details and feedback can be found in these [reports](#).



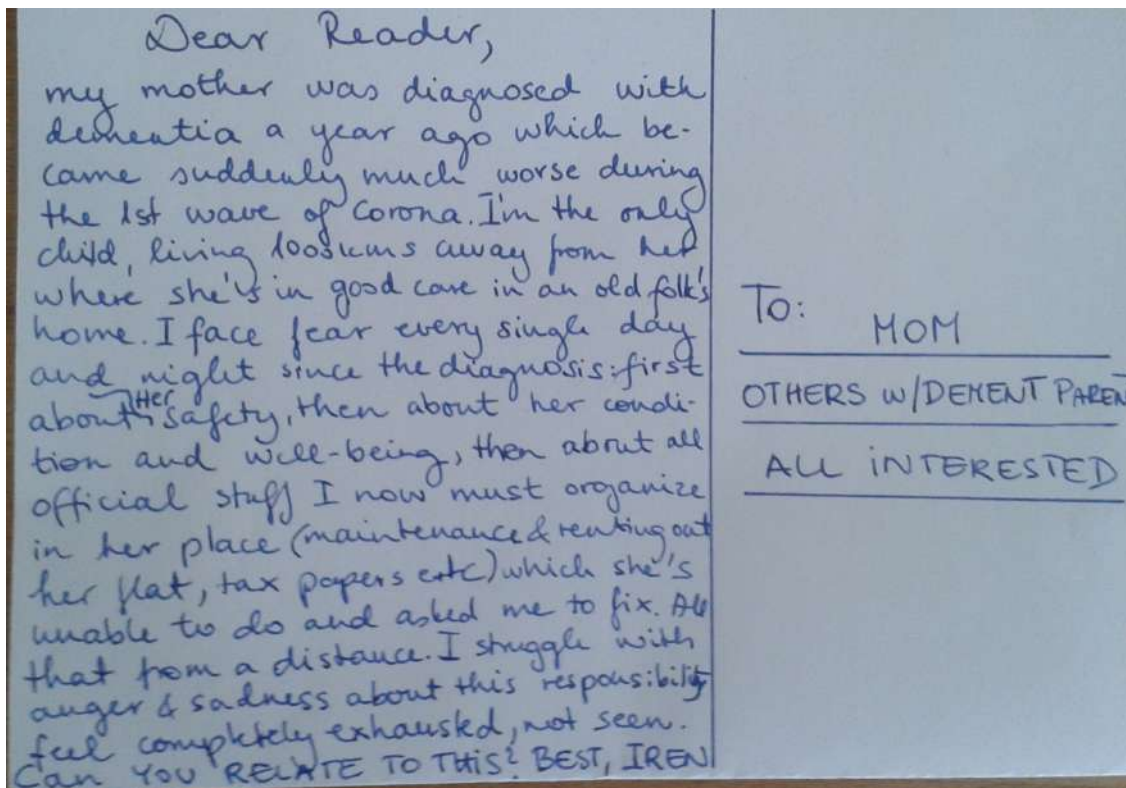
Volunteer Academy, Amsterdam Masterclass cohort 2022

○ **SAIVA, Austin** (USA): Invited by South Asians' International Volunteer Association which works to develop a sense of belongingness between South Asian older adults in their new community where they have immigrated as senior citizens viz. the USA. Conducted a series of online empathy-practices during the pandemic for this extremely enthusiastic set of participants, which helped me uncover many of my own biases about old age and capabilities.



Participants from SAIVA, Austin (USA)

○ **DEMEDARTS, Vienna** (Austria): Selected to present an empathy-practice (response-able postcards) at the DEMEDARTS symposium (2020). Postcards with “any challenge in current daily lives” of primary carers or family of people affected by dementia were collected by me and offered (with their consent) to the symposium participants to respond to—as if they were addressed to them. Though the postcards were addressed to “the doctor”, “the patient”, “my mother”, the symposium participants were invited to engage with two-fold empathy: (a) for the author of the postcard and (b) to place themselves in the shoes of the person to whom the postcard was addressed. Evoking a sense of response-ability (as opposed to responsibility thrust upon us from outside by God, society, an authority), the participants had an opportunity to choose how to respond and connect to this stranger, an effort to understand an-other human being i.e. empathy.



dear iren,
 i can relate to your pain very well. my mother is still well, but i am afraid of all the things you are describing already now. on days when i feel less worried, i sometimes get a sense that this is a process over many years that needs to take place for us to get used to the idea of letting go. and maybe for them as well. and as i write this, again the panic grabs me by the heart. what to do? acknowledge it. sit with it. and learn to accept it maybe - but this is still far away. maybe all these moments will „pay off“ only when i will finally let her go. for now, it's being with this pain. nothing more, nothing less. with great sympathy,
 ursula

b) Artistic Collaborations

○ **Dance Dialogues** with Minou Polleros (UK/Austria): How do we create (new) meanings with our bodies—focusing on signs and gestures? What is the impulse behind these codified gestures? Through a workshop format, we expanded access to embodied meaning-making and found alternatives through first person experience and expression. A further step of this ongoing project is to choreographically explore different forms of Sign Language and personal gestures in the form of a movement choir. We hope to connect with Sign Language practitioners and develop a community with mainstream groups who have hitherto shied away from dance and Deaf sign language (believing it is something they don't 'understand' or it is not for them).



Wir

Austrian Sign Language



We

US Sign Language



We

Indian Sign Language (ISL)



WIR



WIR



WIR



Empathie

Austrian Sign Language



Empathy

UK Sign Language



Empathie

German Sign Language



Finding new gestures for **Empathy** through dance

- **Resonance Studies** with Aboli Dhayarkar (India/the Netherlands): studied the nuances in the space in-between us (dancers) and traced it with strings, fabric and ghungroos (ankle bells). In connection to empathy, this study focused on how a reverberating intersubjective space can be realised.



- **En/countering Stigma** with Lara Nieuwenhuis (South Africa): Understanding stigma as a mark-making strategy vis-à-vis our own artistic practices of dance and drawing as mark-making strategies: on paper, on fabric, in space, unfolded aesthetic practices as opposed to anaesthetic ones. Warmth materials like turmeric, henna, charcoal emerged as pivotal in mark-making, be it drawing or dance. En/countering stigma thus addresses the double layers of meaning of encountering as a coming face-to-face with stigma (not ignoring or shying away from its reality and practice), but also as countering it, confronting it by our alternative mark-making strategies. This work highlights our artistic practices of dance, drawing, frottage as connective practices contrasting with othering practices of stigma.



Exploring what stigma means... to us and how it shapes our outlook, movement and relations.

○ **Spatial Dialogues** with Elisabeth Wildling (Austria): Our light and movement collaboration invited a spatial exploration—to embody margins and reimagine the mainstream... of light, colour, movement, language, community. Experimenting with projectors, screens, light, shadows, and varying their directions and intensities, this study led to an interweaving of body-space, colour-shadows, dance-visual media.



c) Performances

A. **Odissi:**



KulturSommer Wien: with a Kathak dancer (upcoming)



Samskar Bharati temple performance series (July 2016) invited to perform solo Odissi and duet combining with Kathak style.

- ◆ [House concert](#) (2017)
- ◆ Anubhuti (2008-2010): A multimedia art appreciation series in over 10 cities in Maharashtra with MAHAGAMI ensemble, including in a Central Jail (Harsool, Aurangabad) and orphanages. Reflections also published in MAHAGAMI magazine (2010) and Vayam (2017)
- ◆ Germany (Jun 2005) Old age home, Kaarst as part of a cultural exchange programme between Albert Einstein Gymnasium, Kaarst and Fergusson College, Pune.
- ◆ [Belgium](#) (2010) Performed solo in major Indian festival events in Brussels and Ghent



[Reimagining the Mainstream](#), FlussFluss, Graz (2021)



Stand 129: solo Dance in the Box (Jul 2020)



[Aura Aurangabad festival](#), solo and duet (Dec 2015)

B. **Stigma Dialogue:** performance for camera (work in progress)



[Performative understanding of stigma](#)

C. **Indian folk and classical dances:** Invited to perform solo and group, Indian classical and folk dances consecutive 15 days as part of Mudra Cultural Academy at the Dubai shopping festival India Pavillion, Global Village (Feb 2001).

D. Invited to perform semi-classical and folk dances for terminally ill cancer patients and their relatives at [CIPLA palliative care unit](#), Pune (2018)

E. Ladies Express: part of an all women's ensemble series of performances in Pune and adjacent rural areas. (2017–2018)



II. Overview of community practices designed and facilitated

	Name of the practice	Facilitated for	Questions/engages with
1	Global Postcard exchange	India, USA, Japan, S. Korea, Germany, Belgium, South Africa	role of familiarity and strangeness.
2	What's my Superpower?	Art & Empathy Lab (A&E) + SAIVA + Volunteer Academy	intangible capacities + developing a different connection with others
3	Animal gaits	A&E, SAIVA, in person: Mussoorie, ACCEL Bangalore.	(unusual) movement + non-anthropocentric imagination + connecting elements
4	Tracing back your thoughts/ Daydreaming.	A&E	the roots of forming biases, thought-habits
5	Active Listening designed by Shelley Sacks (Modified for American context)	SAIVA	Connecting through image formation + listening
6	Elbow Room Space exploration/ performing presence	NSU 2021, SAIVA, Angewandte group	Relating through movement & space in-between + metaphorical peripheries of the
7	Museum of emotions	Nordic Summer University 2020	Linking feeling & bodily expression (embodied meaning)
8	Response-able postcard writing: Hate postcards/Dementia/Leprosy	A&E, Volunteer Academy, Facebook, DEMEDARTS symposium, Anandwan (people cured from leprosy), Rotary Club (Pune)	Generating awareness, response-ability, in-his-shoes-imagining, empathy.
	Rhizomatic Self-portrait (clay/ drawing)	Angewandte, SSRU, SAR conference, Anandwan (visitors, students)	Tangible image-formation, connecting via differences, privilege awareness, rhizome metaphor
10	Patient Dialogues	Anandwan (students, people cured from leprosy)	Weaving, sense of community, storytelling, dialogue, lasting social exchange, social fabric metaphor.

IV. Forms developed/used and their pedagogical import

Form or technique	Community practice	Artistic research collaboration	Dialogue with oneself, with the world
Empathy practices including: • drawing, • weaving, • movement, • tea-making, • writing, • (active) listening • Goethean Observation	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ - ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ - ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Drawing to understand, moving to understand	✓	✓	✓
Workshop (Dance Dialogues)	✓	✓	✓
Movement choir (participatory performing)	✓	✓	✓
Performing and performance (Stigma performance)	-	✓	✓
Dialogue • Between people (participants, collaborators) • Between disciplines	✓ -	✓ ✓	- ✓
Reading: • As story-listening • As performative	✓ -	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
Mapping or map-making	✓	✓	✓

IV. Publications

- Performance Review of [Tarab](#) (2022) by Ulduz Ahmadzadeh/ATASH contemporary dance company for Tanzquartier Wien (TQW).
- Daddario, Will, Janhavi Dhamankar, Milton Loayza, Jon McKenzie, Yana Meerzon, Tero Nauha, Theron Schmidt, and Aneta Stojnić. 2018. "[What Is Refugee?](#)". *Performance Philosophy* 4 (1):206-33. <https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2018.41198>.
- Dhamankar, J. (2016). Empathy in Practice: Artistic Research Method? in *Artistic Research: Is There Some Method?*. Prague: Academy of Performing Arts.
- [Anubhuti](#) Reflections of performing in Harsool Jail for prisoners, in MAHAGAMI magazine (2010) and Vayam (2017)

V. Lecture performance

John Cage's *Lecture on Nothing* (published 1959/61) was first performed by the author around 1950. It is an early example of a lecture-performance, although that term became widespread only recently. This text is meant to be performed and listened to, rather than just read silently. Cage's *Lecture* explicitly refers to various aspects of a musical piece that are exemplified at the same time, for example, with respect to material, rhythm, structure, repetition, or form. Through our performance, Martin Rumori and I explore the *Lecture* in a simultaneous bilingual presentation, which involves Ernst Jandl's congenial German translation. The format is further enriched by a spatial choreography that is inscribed into the venue's architecture. The chosen modalities of our lecture-performance aim to unearth philosophical components of the text, rather than providing a theatrical experience. This interpretation of Cage's *Lecture* is an outcome of a BASE residency in Palani Hills, Kodaikanal, India (Dec 2017—Mar 2018), where both performers explored the significance of silence in art, philosophy and contemporary forms of life.

- a) Madurai (Jan 2018)
- b) [Delhi](#) (Mar 2018) as part of the BASE collective
- c) [Graz](#) (Oct 2018)

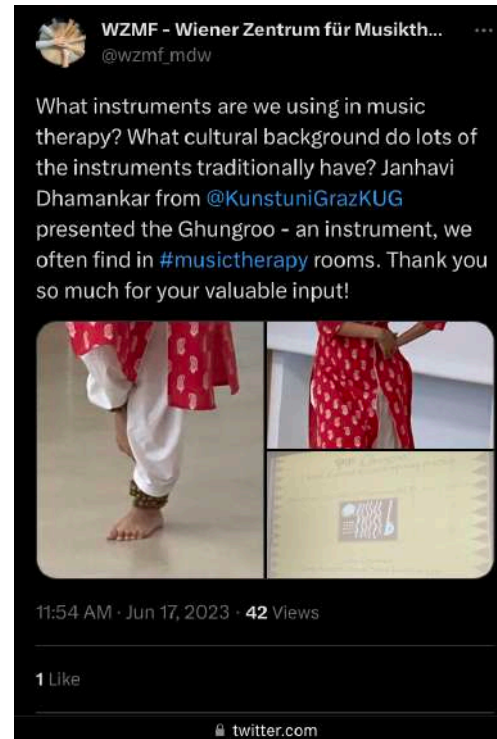
VI. Conference presentations and other performances

- Dhamankar, J. (2021). Dare, Care, Share To Empathise. In *Care, Dare, Share*: 12th International conference for Artistic Research by Society for Artistic Research (SAR).
- Dhamankar, J. (2020). Performing Empathy: Response-able Postcards. Participatory online workshop In *Symposium 2020: Educating empathy, Caring for dementia*. Organised by DEMEDARTS, Vienna.
- Lecture-performance: John Cage's Lecture on Nothing Graz, Madurai Lecture-performance: Lecture on Nothing
- Dhamankar, L. Recreating the Refugee. *Overflow: Philosophy of the Refugee*. Hamburg University, June 2017.
- Dhamankar, J. (2016). Empathy in Practice: Artistic Research Method?, *Artistic Research: Is There Some Method?* Conference by Academy of Performing Arts, Prague.
- Dhamankar, J. (2013). Exploring the theosophical impulse of Bharatnatyam: A dialogue between modernist aesthetics and classical traditions. *Enchanted Modernities Conference: Theosophy and the arts in the modern world*. Universiteit van Amsterdam.
- Dhamankar, J. (2012). An Enquiry into the Nature of Empathy in the relation between a dancer and her audience. *Summer School in Phenomenology and Philosophy of Mind*. By Center for Subjectivity Research, University of Copenhagen.
- Dhamankar, J. (2011). Dynamics of a Performance. *Researcher's Conference*, Institute of Philosophy, K.U.Leuven.
- Dhamankar, J. **Invisible Violence**. (2010). *What if we...*. United States of America. (<http://www.whatifwe.us/2011/sensed-our-surroundings-other-people-and-developed-more-sensitivity/>)
- Dhamankar, J. (2008). 'Vibhutis' in Yoga Philosophy. S. P. College, Pune.
- Dhamankar, J. (2007). Concept of 'Rta'. in the Research Seminar, Department of Philosophy, University of Pune.

VII. Talks



“Humanities: a Worthy option”—to spread awareness about what humanities means, which subjects are included and how and why this is a good first option (rather than the last option) for students passing 10th Standard and going in to College in St. Joseph's High School, Pune, India (Jul 2018).



Invited to speak on “Ghungroo: Historical context and contemporary practice” at *Musiktherapie und Gesellschaft* Symposium, MDW (June 17th 2023).



The Importance of arts-based education at ACCEL, Bangalore (Aug 2018)

- [How to integrate artistic approaches into facilitation](#), with Ghizlane Akourim for Horizontal Talks Podcast, Horizontal School. (2021)
- [Social Sculpture as an Artform: “What is you creates a Resonance in me?”](#) Interview for Elina Akselrud. (2022)
- [Empathy Masterclasses](#), Volunteer Academy, Amsterdam. (2019, 2020, 2022)

VIII. Residencies awarded and work developed

- a) RAW MATTERS - TENDER STEPS, Vienna (Mar 2023)



Workshop format developed for group to explore [personal associations](#) with concepts, thereby unfixing conditioned, learned meanings.



Movement Choir developed with Minou Polleros

- b) BASE, Kodaikanal (Dec 2017—Mar 2018) “In a Silent way: On the Significance of Silence in the Arts, Philosophy and Contemporary forms of life.” With Dr. Arno Böhler and Prof. Susanne Valerie Granzer.
- c) Invited as a Researcher in Residence by the Social Sculpture Research Unit at Oxford Brookes University, Oxford (Sept 2012—April 2013).
- Worked closely under Shelley Sacks, exploring the interconnections between aesthetics, phenomenology and Social Sculpture.
 - I also gave 2 talks to MA students on the “Philosophical underpinnings of Social Sculpture”: of how phenomenology and Social Sculpture overlap and how Social Sculpture in turn has to contribute to the field of aesthetics and shape a new dimension of the aesthetic.
 - Participated in all PhD forums and seminars

- Co-designed exploratory practices with M.A. students: This action developed further into a “Meet and Greet” process which I conducted at Performance Studies International (PSI) #23 Hamburg, for school students in Mussoorie, India and for blind, deaf and mainstream children in Anandwan, India.

Oxford, UK (2012–2013)

Oxford, UK (2012–2013)



Anandwan, India (2022)



PSI Hamburg, Germany (2017)

Woodstock School Mussoorie, India
(Mar 2016)

PSI Hamburg, Germany (2017)

- Trainings with Shelley Sacks in
 - i. Earth Forum: further conducted in India



Chennai (Jan 2015)



Pune Biennale
2015



2nd Future Leader's Cafe,
TERI and TETRAPAK
(Mar 2015)

- ii. Agents of Change
- iii. Goethean Observation: developed further into multiple practices:
 1. For teachers: in collaboration with Amy Seefeld, Centre for Imagination, Woodstock School, Mussoorie, India.
 2. For school students—[Animal gaits](#): a practice to uncover non-anthropomorphic animal movements and develop stories around the animal (based on initial drawings). Usually ends in a guessing game to make it more playful for children.



ACCEL, Bangalore (2018)



Centre for Imagination, Mussoorie, (2016)

IX. Workshops

- ImPulsTanz Public Moves: Odissi, [Bollywood](#), [Folk](#), [Storytelling with gestures workshops](#), once every year (since 2020)
- Brunnenpassage: Odissi, [Bollywood and Folk](#) dance workshops once every year since 2019.



- [University of Music and Performing Arts, Vienna](#) (MDW) (2019)
- University Sports Centre USI Wien (2020, 2021, 2022)



- Summer school, Weimar (Germany, 2006): exploring the possibility of expanding meaning of hand gestures, challenging whether Indian classical dance gestures have meaning only for people acquainted with the Indian context and way of life or can it be global? This was sought by offering the main hand gesture – *Pataka hasta* (a flat palm) and asking them to explore what this gesture could be used for, what and how many things could it mean? Some new imports apart from those found in the traditional texts and usage were uncovered e.g. sending good vibes collectively to one person or thing.
- Copenhagen (2012) researching similar questions as Weimar but adding a thematic element viz. in how many ways can you show fire, water, thunder through movement as a group. Therefore, not restricted to only Indian classical dance gestures but opened a non-structured movement vocabulary.



Copenhagen Aug 2012

X. Lecture-demonstrations

- a) [Belgium International school](#), Waterloo (Oct 2010)
- b) Rotary club, Pune (2015)



- c) Symbiosis Centre for International Education – Invited to give a 3-hour orientation on Indian Dance (Bollywood, folk and semi classical) workshop for 11 students from University of Cologne, Germany. (Mar 2014)

XI. Editor

Worked as content generator and editor for Pune Biennale 2017: being the main point of contact for all artists of the Biennale to understand their projects, materials, contexts in order to showcase the ethos of each project on the Pune Biennale website. Also worked closely with the curator Zasha Colah and Luca Cerizza for the book Habit Co-Habit.

XII. Choreographies

- Numerous Bollywood songs – for fitness classes and for Sangeet ceremonies
- Semi-classical and folk (Gondhal, Rajasthani, Koli, Krishna nee begane)
- Odissi (classical) – Meera bhajans, Naandi, Bhagyada Lakshmi
- Duet with Kathak – Aaj sab mangal gao, Pashunam Patim.
- Collaborative Indian myth choreography as an exploration of aesthetics (Samanvaya)