

MYSTIC ART RETREATS PRESENTS



DEMYSTIFYING DEATH

VARANASI — BETWEEN CULTURE, PRACTICE AND FILMMAKING

VARANASI · JAN 19 - JAN 29 2027

SILVIA MAGGI · MARIYA KARAGYOZOVA

A CARE-BASED DOCUMENTARY & EXPERIENTIAL RETREAT

- ⌘ Exploring death as a lived and shared dimension of existence.
- ⌘ Approaching Varanasi as a threshold between life, ritual, memory, and transformation.
- ⌘ Guided by Mariya Karagyzova and Silvia Maggi.
- ⌘ Tantric philosophy, meditation, yoga, and embodied inquiry.
- ⌘ Creation of a collective poetic documentary film.



MANIKARNIKA GHAT, VARANASI

CREATING A TEMPORARY COMMUNITY OF LISTENING, SENSING, AND WITNESSING

02 WHY VARANASI?

I. VARANASI IS APPROACHED AS A LIVING GEOGRAPHY WHERE

- life and death coexist visibly
- ritual enters everyday life
- dissolution becomes part of collective consciousness

II. IN THE ŚAIVA TANTRIC TRADITION

- death is understood as transformation rather than annihilation
- consciousness continuously moves through creation, preservation, and dissolution
- the city becomes a space to observe impermanence directly

III. THE RETREAT INVITES PARTICIPANTS TO

- remain in ambiguity
- suspend habitual ways of seeing
- encounter mortality through presence rather than avoidance



EMBODIED & SENSORY METHODOLOGY

EACH DAY BEGINS WITH YOGA AND BREATHING
PRACTICES - PRĀṆĀYĀMA & KUMBHAKA, AND
COLLECTIVE GROUNDING RITUALS



SACRED SITES

MANIKARNIKA GHAT · HARISHCHANDRA GHAT ·
MUKTI BHAVAN · PANCHGANGA GHAT · BABA KINARAM ASHRAM

THE SENSES BECOME INSTRUMENTS OF AWARENESS
AND DOCUMENTARY PERCEPTION



04

EXPERIENCE

MARIYA KARAGYOZOVA GUIDES PARTICIPANTS THROUGH ŚAIVA AND ŚAKTA TANTRIC PHILOSOPHY, MEDITATION, AND THE CULTURAL CONTEXTUALIZATION OF DEATH IN VARANASI - WITH YOGA AND BREATHING PRACTICES (PRĀṆĀYĀMA & KUMBHAKA) GROUNDING THE INQUIRY IN THE BODY.

I. **A LIVING PRACTICE OF PERCEPTION**

Each day begins with yoga and breathwork - a shared rhythm: **inhale, hold, exhale**. The cycle becomes both anchor and insight - a reflection of appearance, suspension, and dissolution.

II. **SACRED SITES OF ENCOUNTER**

We move through five locations where death is visible, ritualised, and integrated into life - **Manikarnika, Harishchandra, Mukti Bhavan, Panchganga, Baba Kinaram** - fields where myth, philosophy, and lived reality converge.

III. **FIVE-SENSE IMMERSION**

The senses become instruments of awareness.

seeing **rituals** · hearing chants and the **river** · smelling **fire** and incense ·
feeling heat and **ashes** · tasting **offerings**

LEARNING TO SEE TOGETHER

05 Collective Observation

A RELATIONAL ORIENTATION — TOWARD WHAT THE CAMERA HOLDS, AND WHAT IT MUST LEARN TO RELEASE.

FROM

→ TOWARD

WORKING PRINCIPLES

EXTRACTION

→ OBSERVATION

| Slow down perception

| Observe before recording

SPECTACLE

→ PRESENCE

| Engage ethically with vulnerable spaces Develop

| attention through shared presence

DOCUMENTATION ALONE

→ LISTENING

RECORDING EVERYTHING

→ CAPTURING & LETTING GO

DOCUMENTARY BECOMES A RELATIONAL PRACTICE — A FORM OF CARE, A WAY OF STAYING WITH COMPLEXITY

06 FILMMAKING AS ETHICAL ENCOUNTER

A DOCUMENTARY PRACTICE ROOTED IN **ATTENTION, CONSENT, AND CARE** — GUIDED THROUGH OBSERVATION, SLOWNESS, AND THE QUESTION OF WHAT THE CAMERA IS FOR.

LED BY SILVIA MAGGI

I. THE INTIMATE DEVICE

Mobile phones as accessible, unobtrusive instruments to gather

Images · Sounds · Interviews · Gestures · Textures · Atmospheres

II. THE INQUIRY

- ? When to film? When not to film?
 - ? Consent and vulnerability
 - ? The ethics of representing death
-

III. DAILY AUDIO JOURNALING

An intimate archive of thoughts, memories, sensations, and emotional responses recorded each day as a private companion to the collective work.



A SHARED POETIC DOCUMENTARY

07 Three movements

THE FINAL FILM EMERGES COLLECTIVELY — A CONSTELLATION OF FRAGMENTS, LAYERED PERCEPTIONS, INTERSECTING VOICES, COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN FORMATION.

Chapter I

UNMAKING OF FORM

Disorientation · perceptual rupture · the loss of familiar structures. The viewer is unmade before being shown.

Chapter II

THE CITY AS PRESENCE

Attraction and repulsion · immersion · Varanasi as a living subject. Density of life pressing against ritual.

Chapter III

WHAT REMAINS

Silence · transformation · death as echo and active emptying. Open space, breath, emptiness - what is left when form lets go.

PARTICIPANTS COLLABORATE IN SMALL GROUPS · EDITING BECOMES REFLECTION, SEDIMENTATION, COLLECTIVE MEANING-MAKING

EXCHANGE, COMMUNITY & TRANSFORMATION

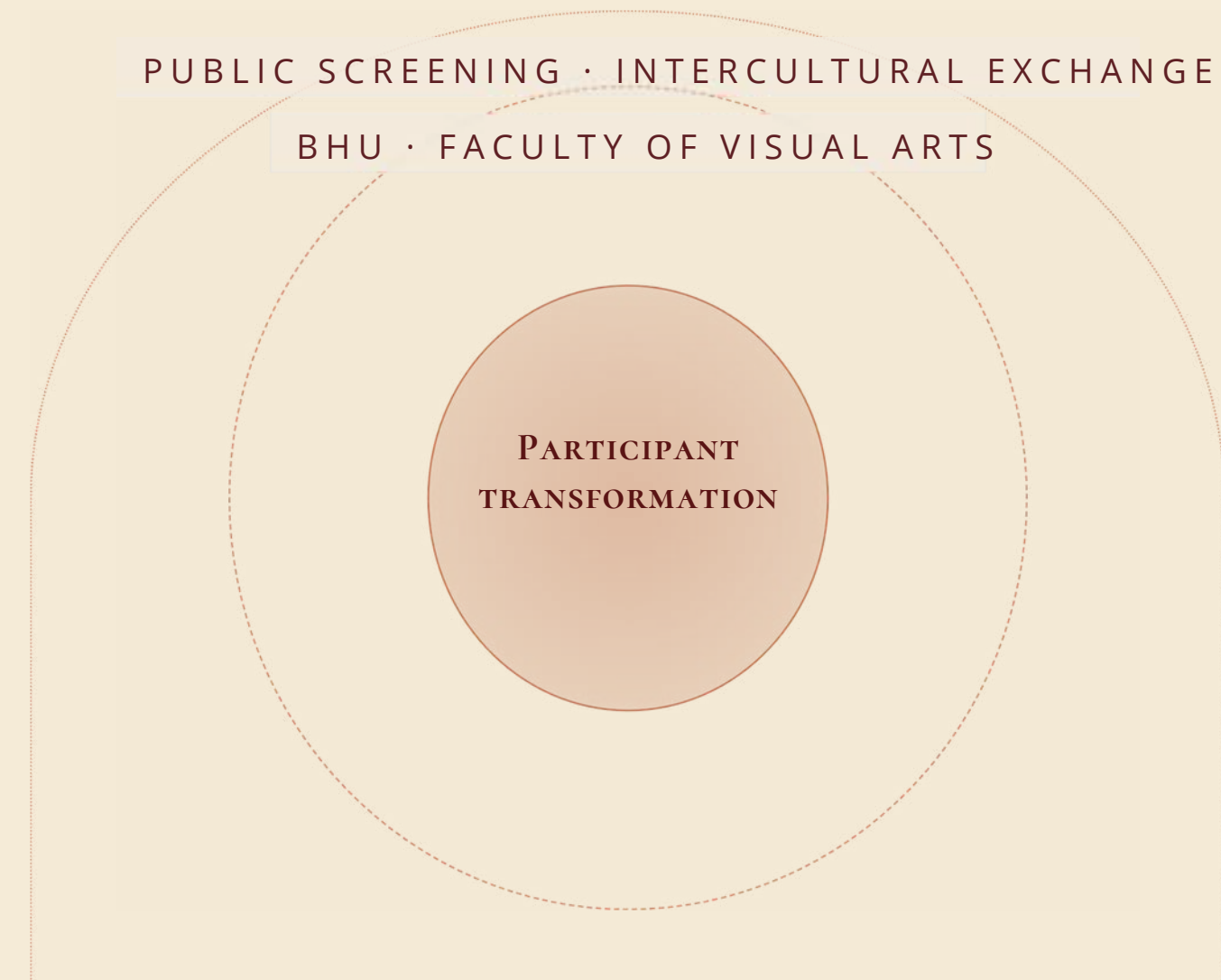
WHAT PARTICIPANTS LEAVE WITH

- A deeper relationship to impermanence
- Embodied and ethical documentary tools
- Experience in collaborative filmmaking
- A shared archive of observation and care
- New ways of perceiving death, memory, and presence
- A documented art exhibition

COLLABORATION CULMINATION

with Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Faculty of Visual Arts.

Public screening - dialogue with local students and artists - intercultural exchange and reflection



GUIDANCE

A CIRCLE OF SCHOLAR-PRACTITIONERS & ARTISTS



**MARIYA
KARAGYOZOVA**

TANTRIC PHILOSOPHY · PRACTICE

Researcher and scholar-practitioner, specializing in the non-dual tradition of *Kashmir Śaivism*. She guides through the tantric perspective, approaching death as a subtle shift within consciousness. Through this lens, death and life are interconnected movements opening a deeper understanding beyond fear and identity.



**SILVIA
MAGGI**

DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

Award-winning documentary filmmaker and artist, leads filmmaking not as mere recording, but as a practice of attention. The archive coexists with oral history, the document with intuition, historical data with poetic construction — restoring complexity to individual and collective stories.



**MUKUL
PUROHIT**

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER · DIRECTOR

Executive Producer of *Mystic Art Retreats*, leading the company's global expansion. Over a decade of multinational experience across corporate finance, business strategy, and the creative sector. A committed patron of the arts and collector — with a long-standing engagement in indigenous cultures, ritual, folklore, and cultural geography.

HONORING THE THRESHOLD BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH THROUGH AWARENESS, CARE, WITNESSING, AND TRANSFORMATION.

JOIN US

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BE PART OF THIS TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY

Enter the sacred dialogue between life, death, awareness, and liberation

For inquiries and participation

Write to:

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