

 MYSTIC ART RETREATS

# Demystifying *Death*

*A documentary retreat in Varanasi*



4–14 March 2027 · with Silvia Maggi & Mariya Karagyozyova · six places

*An invitation*

# Eleven days to meet death *with open eyes*

We invite you to Varanasi to explore death as a lived and shared dimension of existence, and to approach the city as a threshold between life, ritual, memory and transformation.

Each morning you practise. With Mariya Karagyozyova you study the Śaiva view of death; with Silvia Maggi you make a collective documentary film, using only a mobile phone. You leave with the film, a private audio journal and a different relationship with impermanence.

*4–14 March 2027 · Delhi and Varanasi · six places · USD 3,500*





*Life and death coexist in plain sight.*

*Boats below a cremation ghat, Varanasi*

*The city*

# Why Varanasi?

*A living geography.* Life and death coexist in plain sight. Ritual enters everyday life. Dissolution becomes part of collective consciousness.

*The Śaiva tantric view.* Death is understood as transformation, not annihilation. Consciousness moves continuously through creation, preservation and dissolution. The city becomes a place to observe impermanence directly.

*An invitation to participants.* To remain in ambiguity. To suspend habitual ways of seeing. To meet mortality through presence rather than avoidance.



*What you take home*

# You leave with a film you made

A share in a collective documentary film, screened in public at Banaras Hindu University. Embodied and ethical documentary tools.

A deeper relationship with impermanence, and new ways of perceiving death, memory and presence. A shared archive of observation and care, and a documented art exhibition.

*Golden hour on the Ganga*

*Your days*

## Each day, *in three parts*

**Practice.** Yoga, *prāṇāyāma* and *kumbhaka*, with collective grounding rituals. Your senses become instruments of awareness.

**Encounter.** Sessions with Mariya Karagyzova on Śaiva and Śākta tantric philosophy, and curated walks to the sacred sites.

**Making.** Filming with Silvia Maggi on mobile phones, and a private daily audio journal.

*In the closing days, small groups edit the film together, and the retreat ends with a public screening at Banaras Hindu University.*

A day-by-day outline and daily timetable will be shared a couple of months before the retreat.



*Sacred sites*

# Five places of *encounter*

We move through five locations where death is visible,  
ritualised and woven into life, fields where myth, philosophy  
and lived reality meet.

*Manikarnika Ghat*

*Harishchandra Ghat*

*Mukti Bhavan*

*Panchganga Ghat*

*Baba Kinaram Ashram*





*Working principles*

# Learning to *see together*

A relational orientation, toward what the camera holds and what it must learn to release.

From spectacle, *toward presence.*

From extraction, *toward listening.*

From recording everything, *toward observation.*

From documentation alone, *toward capturing and letting go.*

Slow down perception. Observe before recording. Engage ethically with vulnerable spaces. Develop attention through shared presence.

*Documentary becomes a relational practice, a form of care, a way of staying with complexity.*

*Led by Silvia Maggi*

# 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.

*The inquiry.* When to film? When not to film? Consent and vulnerability, and the ethics of representing death.

*The intimate device.* Daily audio journaling: an intimate archive of thoughts, memories, sensations and emotional responses, recorded each day as a private companion to the collective work.

*The material.* Mobile phones serve as accessible, unobtrusive instruments for gathering images, sounds, interviews, gestures, textures and atmospheres.



*A shared poetic documentary*

# Three *movements*

The final film emerges collectively: a constellation of fragments, layered perceptions, intersecting voices and collective memory in formation.

## *Unmaking of form*

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

## *The city as presence*

Attraction and repulsion, immersion, Varanasi as a living subject. The density of life pressing against ritual.

## *What remains*

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

*Participants work in small groups, and editing becomes reflection, sedimentation and shared meaning-making.*



*Mahāśivarātri · 6 March 2027*

# The *Cosmic Night*

*The most sacred moment in the calendar of  
Varanasi*

*Sacred Alignment · Cosmic Portal · Divine Consciousness · Energy ·  
Awakening*



## *Transcendence beyond mortality*

### The ultimate night of awakening

A rare planetary alignment, when the veil between mortal life and cosmic consciousness dissolves.

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#### *The cosmic context*

Channel Śiva's energy of dissolution and rebirth.

### The divine union of Śiva and Pārvatī

Stillness and movement, consciousness and energy, joined in the dance that sustains creation.

#### *Creative catalyst*

Turn profound inner truth into cinematic storytelling.

### Dhrupad Mela

Celebrating the oldest, most meditative form of Hindustani classical music on the sacred ghats.

*Your guide · Film director, photographer and visual artist*

# Silvia Maggi



Born in Italy and based in Berlin, Silvia Maggi is a film director, photographer and visual artist working across documentary, video art and archival storytelling. She studied Sociology at the University of Urbino and Visual Journalism in Bilbao. Her work blends the personal and the political through a poetic gaze, tracing the places where private histories meet memory, identity and collective resistance.

Her films include *Welcome Home*, *26 de Diciembre*, *Innen heraus*, a winner at Lago Film Festival 2024, and *Valery Alexanderplatz*, Best Director at the Berlin Indie Film Festival and Best Documentary in Naples. In 2025 she spoke on the female gaze in documentary at the Veneto Pavilion of the 82nd Venice International Film Festival, and she is a 2026 juror for Lago Film Fest.

Since 2004 she has shown her work at festivals, galleries and universities, among them the Royal Geographical Society in London, Centro de Arte Neomudéjar in Madrid, the Yermilov Center for Contemporary Art in Kharkiv, Universidade do Minho in Braga and Radialsystem in Berlin. Her current project, *Dream Archive*, supported by the Goethe-Institut, gathers anonymous voice recordings of dreams into a shared audiovisual archive.

With Mystic Art Retreats she was the official photographer and visual storyteller of Seats of Power II in India, capturing sacred spaces, intimate practice and shared transformation. Her ongoing research into the feminine and the mystery of death now shapes this retreat.

*At Demystifying Death she leads a participatory workshop in documentary storytelling, archival research and collaborative filmmaking: memory, presence and what we leave behind.*



*Your guide · Tantric philosophy*

# Mariya Karagyzova

Mariya is a devoted spiritual and cultural pilgrim whose long-standing journey through India's most sacred sites, including Mount Kailash, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Varanasi, has profoundly shaped her spiritually, as well as in her roles as a human, writer and researcher.

With a PhD in Indian Literature and Culture and an M.A. in Philosophy and Culture of the East, she combines academic expertise with practical insight into the spiritual traditions that underpin Indian art.

As a scholar-practitioner, her experiences are rooted in a spiritual exploration of Kashmir Śaivism and the concept of *spanda*, the creative pulse of consciousness.

*She bridges ancient wisdom with contemporary creativity, drawing inspiration from Abhinavagupta's aesthetic theory and exploring the dynamic facets of consciousness in art.*

# What people *ask us*

## *Do I need to be a filmmaker?*

No previous filmmaking experience is needed. We film on mobile phones, with Silvia Maggi guiding each step; the work is on a poetic gaze and sensitivity in capturing.

## *Is it emotionally safe?*

The work is care-based. Filming is guided by consent and attention to vulnerability. Mariya, Silvia and Mukul are present on the ground, holding space for you in your tender moments.

## *Are flights included?*

Domestic flights between Delhi and Varanasi are included. International flights are not.

## *Can I come on my own?*

Yes. Every room is single occupancy, and the group is only six.

## *I have recently lost someone. Should I come?*

Yes. This immersion creates a space for you to transform your emotions and reflect on the process gently.

## *What if I need to cancel?*

You can pay in three instalments up to the start of the retreat. The deposit is non-refundable.

*Your place*

# *USD 3,500*

*Under USD 320 a day, across eleven days. Single occupancy throughout.*

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Four-star hotels in Delhi and Varanasi · domestic flights between Delhi and Varanasi · airport transfers · all tuition and guided sessions · curated walks and excursions · all meals, except breakfast on the arrival day and lunch on the final day.

International flights are not included.

*Six places*

Pay in three instalments up to the start of the retreat. The deposit is non-refundable.

*Six places · 4–14 March 2027*

# Book a call with *Mariya Karagyozova*

Write to us and we will arrange a time to talk. There is no obligation,  
and it is the best way to know whether this retreat is for you.

[mp@mysticart.org](mailto:mp@mysticart.org)

Full details at [mysticart.org](https://mysticart.org)

