

Trust Issues: A Micro-History of Community-Based “Institutions of Care” in Colonial Statecraft

Ranjit Kandalgaonkar

Trust Issues: This multi-disciplinary and multi-year image study and city-wide research project documents the fugitive and informal nature of pre-independence trusts in 19th century Bombay (now Mumbai) that were developed through community-based practices peripheral to and alongside colonial statecraft. These trust-run communities or “institutions of care”, functioned in parallel and as an alternative to (a well-documented history of) patronage involving key figures (affluent citizens and philanthropists alike). While some trusts in the city performed (and continue to perform, as Covid-19 is also beginning to show us) a large-scale sourcing and supplying of aid, the trusts this study documents are ones that dealt with more nuanced forms of philanthropy or benevolence that also masquerade a uniquely historical kind of power. In a span of a hundred years during the city-development phase (1820-1890), this “trust movement” in Mumbai redrew the map of the city, re-ordered the human and animal multiplicities that flowed through various spaces of this region, and established a community-driven set of enclaves harbouring unique typologies of space, personal histories and lived conditions. Through the act of drawing and diagramming, not only to illustrate or aid, but also to re-imagine spaces, timelines and scenarios of 19th century Bombay, this project draws on varied data collection methods, including site visits, architectural surveying and archival work to explore the different dimensions of trusts’ “acts of benevolence” as “tensions of care”: while the trusts’ constitution, operation and ways of living are closely guarded and ambiguous (to the public eye), they are also organised and community-driven, myopic but magnanimous, convivial yet communal, and also managed to function while brokering agency within colonial statecraft. As part of the art practice, an attempt is made to locate these images at intersections between mechanisms to explain systems, fantasy settings to explain scenarios, and raw data to convey information. The images also highlight the unique quality of a particular trust and the conditions that merited its existence. This project explores how we define the role of *these institutions of care* within the agency that statecraft operates under. It asks: are these forgotten autonomous institutional models of care-giving?

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<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/949962878>

Stories of Philanthropic Trusts: An Image Study

<https://rkive.co.in/stories-of-philanthropic-trusts.html>

Acknowledgements

Three iterations of this project since 2009 listed below have been supported by:

1. UDRI FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME—Urban Design Research Institute

Title of work: *Stories of Philanthropic Trusts*

2009-2011, Mumbai

2. SEED AWARD IN HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCE—The Wellcome Trust

Title of research residency: *The Architecture of Public Health Trusts in Colonial Bombay*

Collaborators: Brenna Bhandar, SOAS University of London & Vinita Gatne,
Architect/Researcher

2015-2016, London

3. ARTIST RESIDENCY—Gasworks Artist Residency in collaboration with Wellcome Collection

EXHIBITION—Ayurvedic Man, curated by Bárbara Rodríguez Muñoz

Title of work: *Drawing the Bombay Plague*

2017, London

Conferences:

Legal and Spatial Architectures in Colonial Environments, Centre for Research
Architecture, Goldsmiths University of London

3rd May 2016

The Social Life of Care, University of Cambridge

13th-15th May 2021

Ranjit Kandalgaonkar's art practice primarily comprises a lens directed at the urban context of cities. Some of the works map vulnerability within redevelopment strategies of urbanisation or record timelines and "blindspots"—alternate markers of a city that's unraveling. A study of combative histories of reclamation and speculation has led to projects such as "Isles Amidst Reclamation" and "7 Isles Unclaimed". Most of his long-term projects are research-intensive and attempt to unlock historical and contemporary data by placing the work in the context of an unseen social history. A practice in parallel; a *longue durée* project named "Modelled Recycled Systems" records ship-breaking practices and studies invisible shipping infrastructures.

Awards and grants include Majlis Visual Arts Fellowship, UDRI Fellowship, Leverhulme Artist Residency, Harvard University SAI Artist Residency, The Wellcome Trust Seed Grant, BGSW Artist Residency and Gasworks Artist Residency. His works have been showcased at Bergen Assembly, Colomboscope Bienalle, Savvy Contemporary, Art Jameel, Bonniers Konsthall, Warehouse 421, S.a.L.E Docks, Honggah Museum and BGSW amongst others locally (in Mumbai) and overseas.