Ishara Art Foundation is pleased to announce the opening of *Growing Like A Tree: Static In The Air*, the second iteration of the exhibition *Growing Like a Tree* curated by artist Sohrab Hura. The exhibition will be on view from 11 September 2021 to 9 December 2021.

*Growing Like A Tree: Static In The Air* is Ishara’s latest initiative to nurture emerging and cutting edge artistic practices from South Asia on an international platform. With this show, the Foundation furthers its commitment to path-breaking curatorial directions in the fields of photography and contemporary art by inviting Hura to expand on his debut curatorial project that opened in January this year.
From September 11 to 16, Hura will transform the existing show at the Foundation through a process of live interventions that will be open to the public. Taking a dynamic approach to exhibition-making as a form that is not fixed, *Static In The Air* extends Hura’s navigation in the field of image-making practices across geographic borders, drawing new nodes, maps and interconnections.

Altering in visual and aural intensity, the show introduces multiple levels of experiences as several texts in the exhibition change, newly added works sit side by side with selected existing works, some of which shift in scale and volume. Together they form a cumulative current of images, texts and sounds. According to Hura, the reference to frequencies is a reminder of how we inhabit the contemporary through moments that cannot be cut off from the past or the future. His curation embodies this idea as the exhibition gradually unfolds, layering our experiences of time and space, image and sound.

Photographic works such as Kushal Ray’s *Intimacies* map time over a decade in the life of a family. Prantik Basu’s short film *Sakhisona* moves further into the past to unearth stories and songs performed around an ancient mound in West Bengal, where 6th-century artifacts were discovered. In Rahee Punyashloka’s *Noise reduction II: Chinatown*, the screen becomes a landscape embedded with material corruptions such as scratches on film, as well as spliced imagery and fragmented voiceovers. The Packet collective creates their own soundscape by installing a dot-matrix printer that emits reams of paper into the exhibition space. Both Zainab Mufti’s *The Weight of Snow on Her Chest* and Raqs Media Collective’s video *31 Days* reference times of isolation. Mufti offers intimate perspectives from the inside and outside spaces of a home and garden in Kashmir. *31 Days*, which is presented as a citation, performs the act of note-taking, invoking a multitude of characters both fictional and non-fictional encountered in the past year.

*Static In The Air* emphasizes the importance of traversing the world through listening. It gestures towards a re-tuning of sonic frequencies while learning to stay with static. Among the works that will be carried over from the previous iteration, headphones are removed from Reetu Sattar’s *Lost Tune* so that its sound is amplified in the space enabling it to interact differently with surrounding works and point to alternative ways of seeing - and hearing - an exhibition. *Origin* by Sarker Protick lessens in volume while Farah Mulla’s work *Aural Mirror* goes silent, followed by an on-site activation by the artist. A book of photographs, *Astres Noirs*, made in collaboration between Katrin Koenning and Sarker Protick...
creates another visual conversation between two artists who were presented separately in the first iteration.

The ensemble of artists and collectives in the second iteration include Aishwarya Arumbakkam, Bunu Dhungana, Farah Mulla, Jaisingh Nageswaran, Katrin Koenning, Kushal Ray, Nida Mehboob, Prantik Basu, Rahee Punyashloka, Raqs Media Collective, Reetu Sattar, Sarker Protick, Sathish Kumar, The Packet and Zainab Mufti, along with site-specific interventions by Sohrab Hura.

Growing Like A Tree: Static In The Air will be accompanied by physical and virtual tours, artistic interventions by guest artists including Isaac Sullivan, educational and public online programmes, and newly commissioned artist texts over the duration of the show.

Ishara Art Foundation is presented in partnership with Alserkal.

Exhibition Dates: September 11, 2021 – December 9, 2021

- Growing Like A Tree: Static In The Air expands on the exhibition ‘Growing Like A Tree’ curated by Sohrab Hura, his debut curatorial project as an artist.
- The exhibition features works by 15 artists and collectives from Bangladesh, Germany, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- This exhibition marks Ishara’s commitment to supporting new curatorial directions in the field of photography and contemporary art.
- The exhibition considers photography and sound within an expanded field of practices that includes videos, books and aural interventions.
- The Ishara Art Foundation, located in Alserkal Avenue, Dubai, is the first permanent space in the Gulf dedicated to South Asian contemporary art.
- The non-profit foundation is established by Dubai resident, collector and patron, Smita Prabhakar.

Aishwarya Arumbakkam (b.1988) is an artist from Chennai, India based in Austin, Texas. Arumbakkam works across multiple media including photography, filmmaking and drawing. Her work centers on cultural narratives and identity, and finds expression in mythological and personal narratives. She is drawn to subtlety, slowness and poetry as political gestures within her practice, an approach influenced by her background as a Bharatanatyam dancer and filmmaker. She has exhibited her work in India, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, China and the UK. In 2020, she was awarded the Magnum Foundation Photography and Social Justice Fellowship. She was selected as one of the ‘Ones to Watch’ by the British Journal of Photography in 2019. She is currently pursuing an MFA in Studio Art at The University of Texas at Austin.
**Bunu Dhungana** (b. 1981) is an artist based in Kathmandu, Nepal. She uses photography as a medium to explore and question the world around her. Her background in sociology informs her photographic work, questioning notions of gender and patriarchy. While her personal projects revolve around gender, she has worked in a wide range of fields from visual ethnography and non-profit work to commercial and journalistic projects. Her work has been exhibited in Photo Kathmandu, Dali International Photo Exhibition, KunstKasten, Serendipity Arts Festival, Chobi Mela and Mannheimer Kunstverein. She is associated with photo.circle and Nepal Picture Library in Kathmandu and has recently completed her fellowship at The Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute at Harvard University.

**Farah Mulla** (b. 1988) is a multimedia artist based in Goa, India. Her background in science overlaps with her art practice which explores the perception of sound and its effects on human neurology and subjectivity. Often investigating different media, she uses the human voice, field recordings, circuits and other modes of inquiry to explore sonic aspects, our listening experience and the invisible agency of sound via multiple modes of perception. Mulla completed her MFA at the Cambridge School of Art, U.K. and was part of the Dharti Arts Residency. She has had solo exhibitions in Mumbai at Jehangir Art Gallery and has presented her work at the Serendipity Arts Festival in Goa. Her participation in group shows include Sakshi Gallery and Ruskin Gallery.

**Jaisingh Nageswaran** (b. 1978) is a self-taught photographer from Madurai, India. Born dyslexic to working class parents, he was taught by his grandmother at home, and did his Masters in Mass Communication at the Madurai Kamaraj University in India. Jaisingh Nageswaran’s practice focuses on documenting socially vulnerable communities, rural life and his family in India. He is a grantee of the Serendipity Arts Foundation and Les Rencontres d’Arles Grant in 2020. He became a Magnum Foundation Photography and Social Justice Fellow in 2021. His work has been presented at ‘Then the Night of the Year’ at Photo Phnom Penh. He is an active member of two artist collectives, 13JARA and Guldasta.

**Katrin Koenning** (b. 1978) is an artist from the Ruhrgebiet region in Germany and is currently based in Naarm, Melbourne, Australia. Her documentary work explores stories and experiences through an engagement with the everyday. Koenning’s photographs have been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions including the Centre for Contemporary Photography, Paris Photo, Chobi Mela, Peckham 24, Chennai PhotoBiennale and the Australian Centre for Photography. She is a recipient of the Bowness Photography Prize and The Daylight Award. Her work is published in The New Yorker, The New York Times, British Journal of Photography, The Guardian and Der Spiegel. She is represented by ReadingRoom in Melbourne.

**Kushal Ray** (b. 1960) is an artist based in Kolkata, India. He started his career with The Telegraph newspaper in 1982 as a sports journalist, which is where he took to photography. After he quit journalism in 1991, he began working as an independent photographer. His first solo exhibition in 1998 was about Ladakh, titled *Everyday Life of an Exotic Land* at the Piramal Gallery in Mumbai. Since then, his project *Intimacies*, which he started in 1998, culminated in a book in 2012. He has been part of several group shows including *Relative Values: Some Current Trends in Indian Photography*, curated by Sunil Gupta at the University of Southampton. He is the first recipient of the Dignity Grant awarded by Dayanita and participated in Chobi Mela in 2021.
Nida Mehdooob (b. 1985) is a photographer and filmmaker based in Lahore, Pakistan. She was trained as a pharmacist before she began pursuing photography at the Pathshala Southasian Media Institute in Bangladesh. Her interests include issues of social injustice such as religious and gender-based discrimination in Pakistan. She participated in the Angkor Photo Workshop and the Social Justice fellowship by Magnum Foundation. Her short films have screened at international film festivals including Locarno Film Festival. She is a mentee of the 2021 Women Photograph Grants in partnership with Getty Images. She is currently an artist in residence at Akademie der Künste in Berlin.

The Packet (established in 2019) is made up of a group of artists from Colombo, Sri Lanka. With a particular focus on hyper-locality, collaborative processes and conversation, it grew out of 8 artists coming together to realize an artist publication entitled The Packet. While a core group of members continue to drive its work, The Packet functions as a collaborative platform that has embraced the work of 19 young artists in Sri Lanka to date. They work across print and digital mediums, with site-specific interventions that respond to a stratified world, exploring what it looks like ‘to do thinking in public’. Their work has been featured in the Serendipity Arts Festival (2019, 2020), the Goethe Institut’s Day-Afterthoughts project (2020), among others.

Prantik Basu (b. 1986) is a filmmaker and screenwriter based in Kolkata, India. Oscillating between fiction, non-fiction and folk narratives, Basu’s work engages with the politics of gender and the fragile relation between humans and nature. His short film Sakhisona (2017) won a Tiger Award at International Film Festival Rotterdam IFFR, the Best Short Film Prize at the Mumbai International Film Festival and the Grand Jury Prize Italy’s Castrovillari Film Festival. Palace of Colours (2019) premiered at Berlinale, where it was nominated for the Golden Bear for Best Short Film. He is currently developing his first feature with support from the Hubert Bals Fund, IFFR and the PJLF Arts Fund.

Rahee Punyashloka (b. 1993) is a writer, visual artist, and filmmaker based in New Delhi. His video works, especially the Noise Reduction series, are philosophical inquiries into the nature of how we perceive, process and remember the materiality of images. This series has been exhibited in numerous venues including the International Film Festival, Rotterdam and the Tribeca Film Festival (New York). Punyashloka belongs to the Dalit community and has expanded his practice toward creating visual art that is rooted in Dalit histories and Ambedkarite iconography. He is currently writing his first novel, A Manual for Shapeshifting, under the mentorship of Madhuri Vijay from the South Asia Speaks program.

Raqs Media Collective (established in 1992). The word “raqs” in several languages denotes an intensification of awareness and presence attained by whirling, turning, being in a state of revolution. Raqs take this sense to mean ‘kinetic contemplation’ and a restless and energetic entanglement with the world, and with time. Based in New Delhi, Raqs Media Collective practices across several media; making installation, sculpture, video, performance, text, lexica, and curation. They were the artistic directors of the Yokohama Triennale 2020, Afterglow and their forthcoming solo exhibition The Laughter of Tears will be at the Kunstverein Braunschweig (2021).

Reetu Sattar (b. 1981) currently works between Dhaka, Bangladesh and Berlin, Germany. With an interdisciplinary practice that encompasses live performance and documentation, she employs
objects as archival memories in an effort to re-examine history and human perception. Her work has been presented at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, Liverpool Biennial, Dhaka Art Summit, the British Film Institute in London, Alserkal Avenue and Ishara Art Foundation in Dubai, Artspace in Sydney and Palais de Tokyo in Paris and NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore. Her performances have been staged internationally at venues in London, Birmingham, Bangkok and Goa.

**Sarker Protick** (b. 1986) is a photographer based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. His practice combines the roles of an image-maker, a teacher and a curator. His works revolve around the subjects of temporality, the materiality of time and the metaphysical prospects of Light and Space. Working with photography, video and sound, his works incorporate detailed observations and subtle gestures; his works propose a subjective space, often minimal, vast and atmospheric. Protick has been the recipient of the Light Work Residency, Magnum Foundation Fund, World Press Photo Award, among others. He is a faculty member of Pathshala South Asian Media Institute and Co-curator at Chobi Mela International Festival of Photography.

**Sathish Kumar** (b. 1986) is a photographer based in Chennai, India. He was brought up in Kanchipuram, India and he spent a large part of his school vacations at his uncle’s photo studio, which became an inspiration for him to pursue photography. He got a point and shoot film camera from his uncle as a gift which he always carried around to school picnics, cricket grounds, shooting his friends and surroundings. With his photography, he records everyday reality, as a reflection of his life and the world around him, seeking to build a sense of connection with a person, a tree, a forest or a mountain. Kumar’s *Town Boy* series was awarded the Serendipity Arles Grant in 2021.

**Zainab** (b. 1998) is a visual artist based in Kashmir. She has just finished her honors in journalism and mass communication at Government College for Women. She is currently freelancing as a photojournalist. Her engagements with photography are mostly personal, involving the documentation of her own experiences that arise out of surviving in a military occupied region. Zainab is one of the founding members of Kashmir’s women photographers’ collective, Her Pixel Story, dedicated to bring out women’s perspectives and narratives of daily happenings in Kashmir. Her photographs have been exhibited at *Paradise Lost: Desire and Dissent Contemporary Art from Kashmir*, held at Old School gallery, University of Leiden (2018).