



From left: Bhargavi Raju, Aarti Lohia, Arundhati Ghosh, Spandana Bhowmik, Menaka Rodriguez, Shalaka Redkar and Shubham Roy Choudhury

FOCUS

A SENSE OF PLACE

Among the Khasi tribes of North-East India, the tiger is called khla, and is regarded as an ancestral spirit. While the predator is dreaded as a man-eater in most Indian myths, in Khasi folktales it is depicted as a protective figure. Three years ago, when Shillong-based researcher Avner Pariat decided to explore this unique narrative of the tiger as a social, emotional, and political symbol in Khasi cultural practices, he sought a grant from the Bengaluru-based India Foundation for the Arts (IFA). The grant enabled Pariat to travel for a year across Khasi regions to investigate the influence of deforestation and Christianity on the tiger cult of Meghalaya. He video-documented festivals, folk dances and conducted interviews with village elders, priests, and mendicants. This massive volume of oral narratives and video footage has been funnelled into a repository of information that points to the many environmental and societal influences that could change the future of the Khasi tribes. And all of it is now accessible

Alternative history of those from the margins now finds permanent space and spotlight in the newly-opened India Foundation for the Arts Archive, finds RAJASHREE BALARAM

through the IFA Archive launched in October, in collaboration with the Lohia Foundation, a charitable trust which works in the area of education, healthcare and conservation.

HISTORY UNFILTERED

“Five years ago when I first met Arundhati Ghosh, who heads IFA, and learned about the staggering breadth of projects they support with their grants, I realised the organisation will have a huge impact and influence in our country’s artistic history,” says Aarti Lohia, a well-known art patron, who is spearheading the Lohia Foundation. Over the past two decades, the IFA has supported 540 projects that essentially attempt to reinterpret identity, otherness, and community through mediums as diverse as paintings, text, films, theatre, installations, and performances. Though talks about the possibility of a physical and digital archive were initiated in 2015, Lohia reveals that the legwork that went into the project was more >

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