

ANNUAL REPORT: 2010—2011



about the organization ...



After almost two decades, SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) remains the only artist-run centre in Canada dedicated to the development and presentation of contemporary visual art by South Asian artists. Our mission is to produce innovative programs that critically explore issues and ideas shaping South Asian identities and experiences within a larger Canadian context. We encourage work that is challenging, experimental and engaged in critical discussions of visual forms and processes, and which offer new perspectives on contemporary art.

SAVAC develops and produces exhibitions, interventions and education and outreach programs. SAVAC works without a gallery space, and typically in collaboration with other artist-run centres, public galleries, and visual arts and educational organizations. This collaborative process of working allows us to foster important ties with the mainstream art community, encouraging an exchange of ideas and perspectives, and increase our organizational reach and visibility.

SAVAC's programming is national in scope, but we are actively engaged with regional and international discussions informing the development of contemporary South Asian art. SAVAC plays a vital role in the visual arts sector in Canada by advocating for South Asian artists and culturally diverse issues and practices. The term South Asian is fluid, implying a self-identification within our mandate.

SAVAC receives operating funding from all levels of government: The Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Council. SAVAC gratefully acknowledges the support of these funding agencies. SAVAC flourishes because of the energy, commitment and enthusiasm of its members and volunteers.

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**Canada Council
for the Arts**

**Conseil des Arts
du Canada**



**ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO**



from the board of directors — chair's report ...

It is my pleasure, on behalf of the SAVAC Board of Directors, to provide a brief overview of Board activities in 2011

At the last AGM, Hans Bathija, Jit Dhaliwal, Asma Mahmood, Preethy Sivakumar and Swapnaa Tamhane were elected to the Board of Directors.

This past year SAVAC's Board of Directors continued to work on meeting goals outlined in the Strategic Plan passed in the previous year, with a special focus on income diversification, development and fundraising.

In the summer of 2011, SAVAC's Executive Director Haema Sivanesan resigned to take up a new position as the Executive Director of Centre A in Vancouver. The Human Resource committee began an executive search, and in January of 2012 appointed Ambereen Siddiqui as SAVAC's next Executive Director.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following donors for their financial support of our exhibitions and publications program:

aftermodern.Lab,
Hans Bathija
Surendra Lawoti
Afshin Matlabi
Julia Ouellete
Shelly Sarkar
Ketan Vegda

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the SAVAC team and my fellow board colleagues. Finally, on behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our members for their support and participation in 2011.

Fayiaz Chunara
Chairman, Board of Directors
SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre)

executive director's report ...

Two years after leaving to pursue a Masters in Fine Art, I am delighted to be able to return to SAVAC. I am coming back with an unfettered admiration for the work that the staff, the board, and the membership have put into creating an organization that engages a broad cross-section of communities, both within and beyond Canada. As an artist I found support from SAVAC early in my career. *Big Stories, Little India* was my first group show, and since then I have showed my work in the members' juried show as well as *Monitor*. I am thus keenly aware of the impact that SAVAC can have on an emerging artist's practice. In addition, SAVAC has made accessible the works of many many established artists, including Bani Abidi, Hamra Abbas, Ali Kazimi, Brendan Fernandes, Gauri Gill, Jayce Salloum and Khadim Ali, as well as curators like Jon Soske, Sharmini Pereira and Richard Fung, to name a few. I bring to SAVAC a commitment to developing our education and outreach programs alongside our strong exhibition programming to help create a broader audience for contemporary South Asian art.

While reporting on last year's achievements I would like to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of Haema Sivanesan, formerly the Executive Director, and Srimoyee Mitra, formerly the Programming Coordinator. They have played large and important roles in elevating the programming at SAVAC to the critical acclaim it now enjoys. We at SAVAC are excited by the new positions that they have taken up, Haema as Executive Director at Centre A in Vancouver, and Srimoyee as Curator of Contemporary Art at the Art Gallery of Windsor, and we hope to continue to draw upon their expertise, and to foster relationships with them in their new capacities.

Some of the highlights from our programming last year include the tongue-in-cheek commentary that emerged from our collaboration with the Art Gallery of Ontario in presenting *Museum of Found Objects: Toronto (Maharajah and — —)* as a response to *Maharaja: The Splendor of India's Royal Courts*. The exhibition and the resulting catalogue by artists Sameer Farooq and Mirjam Linschooten deconstruct and challenge the historical and contemporary notions of presenting South Asian art, especially within institutional and gallery settings.

Also noteworthy, was the presentation of Gauri Gill's photographic work *The Americans* at the Mississauga Central Library this past summer. We would like to extend our congratulations to Gauri for being honoured this year with the 2011 Grange Prize.

The exhibition **دل که سوز ندارد, دل نیست** (*the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart*), winner of the Images Prize for Best Canadian Media Artwork at the 23rd Annual IMAGES FESTIVAL Awards, toured nationally, showing at Plug In ICA in Winnipeg, the Kenderdine Art Gallery at the University of Saskatchewan, as well as internationally at the University of Technology in Sydney.

SAVAC's model is interesting in that we work without a gallery space. This demands that we continuously seek partnerships with other organizations for exhibitions, bringing a more integrated and holistic approach with which we present the work created under our identity-based mandate. This spirit of partnership and dialogue carries over from our programming into our community partnerships, where we co-present at screenings, lectures and symposia. We contribute our skills and experience in contemporary South Asian art to the dialogue, and in turn consider our participation a vital part of our learning within the arts and academic communities. Last year we partnered with the Toronto Reel Asian International Film Festival to present a screening of film and video shorts, and with the Caribbean Studies at the New College, and the Centre for Diaspora and Transnational Studies to present a public lecture by Roshini Kempadoo.

executive director's report (cont'd) ...

To keep our membership informed about our various partnerships and programs, as well as to announce opportunities, a monthly newsletter is distributed through our mailing list. We are using Facebook and Twitter to keep our membership, partners and supporters informed about our programming. You can also visit our website, which contains a comprehensive archive of our past programming, and is constantly updated to reflect current programming and opportunities.

Also on our website we provide links for members and supporters to donate and help raise funds for SAVAC in its efforts in promoting contemporary South Asian art. SAVAC maintains its Charitable Status and as we look at the next year and its fiscal challenges with anticipated cuts in funding for the arts, I would like to encourage members and friends to contribute. You can register your support by clicking on the Canada Helps button on our website, or by visiting www.canadahelps.org.

One of our Board's primary goals for this new year is to raise funds to supplement the support we receive from the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council. We are privileged to have Directors who bring a wealth of experience to be able to help us achieve this. Our Directors are actively engaged in the arts community at the MOCCA, the Regent Park Film Festival, and Mosaic, the South Asian Heritage Festival of Mississauga, as well as academic communities at the University of Toronto and Humber College. I would like to recognize the Board of Directors for their diligence in the past year, and would like to thank Fayiaz for his tireless efforts, Tavinder for his guidance and Ananya for her unstinting support in overseeing the change in our staff

I am grateful for the support of members who have served on our programming committee; Francis Ferdinand, Reeta Saeed, Osheen Harruthoonyan, Ananya Ohri and Swapnaa Tamhane for their insightful feedback and their always-willing help.

I would like to thank the dedicated staff at SAVAC, especially during this time of transition: Sharlene Bamboat, our Programming Co-ordinator; Kohila Kurunathan, our Communications and Outreach Officer; and Ghufran Sallay, our bookkeeper.

We wouldn't be able to achieve all that we do without people who devote their time and expertise in ways big and small. I would, in particular, like to thank Trevor Embury of *aftermodern.lab* for generously donating his time in designing our catalogue for *The Annual* and Nahin Islam, our intern over this past summer. I would like to thank all our members for their interest, contributions and support for our programs. Sharlene, Kohila and I, as well as the Board of Directors at SAVAC, look forward to working with you in the coming year.

Ambereen Siddiqui
Executive Director
SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre)

programming report ...

2010/11 has been an exciting year of for SAVAC –with programming, as well as staff transitions. I'd like to begin by thanking Srimoyee and Haema for giving me the opportunity to work as interim programming coordinator. I was introduced to SAVAC while researching for my Graduate thesis on South Asian Experimental Film & Video at York University. All my research brought me to SAVAC - which at the time was (and still continues to be) one of the only organizations in North America that exhibits experimental film and video by South Asian artists. In 2009, my short film *Tapestry* was selected to be part of *Monitor 6*, and after 2 years of researching and writing on Monitor for my thesis, it felt exciting to finally be a part of it. In 2009 and 2010 my work was included in SAVAC's annual juried members' show, giving a platform to my emerging art practice. As I now work on programs such as *Monitor* and *The Annual*, I feel that I am able to reciprocate.

I have always understood SAVAC to be developing an art community within Canada, and to be able to contribute to the symbiotic relationship of the organization makes me proud. With my knowledge as a practicing artist, I hope to contribute to the artist run culture that SAVAC is cultivating.

Sharlene Bamboat
Programming Coordinator
SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre)

Velocity: The Rate of Change of Position / 17-26 September, Function 13 Gallery, Toronto

SAVAC held its annual juried member's show. The exhibition consisted of different media from our members; from video installation work to sculpture to photography. The opening of the show was well received and attended, with artist talks from a few of the artists present.

دل که سوز ندارد, دل نیست (*the heart that has no love/pain/generosity is not a heart*)

14 September - 22 October, 2010. UTS Gallery, Sydney, Australia

January 2011 - Kenerdine Art Gallery, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon

August - October, Plug In ICA, Winnipeg

Since its 2008 debut at Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art in Kelowna, BC and it's award-winning show at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, "... *heart*..." has toured across Canada, and internationally. The opening reception at UTS Gallery in Sydney was attended by the Consul General of Canada in Sydney, and the Chairman of the Sydney Biennale.

programming report (cont'd) ...

MONITOR touring program

MONITOR 6 / 19 October 2010. McIntosh Gallery, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario

MONITOR: Canadian Shorts / 20 November, 2010. Winnipeg Film Group

Due to the success of MONITOR in Toronto, SAVAC has begun touring it regionally and nationally. Our peers in the arts community are recognizing the strength of the program as we see a sustained interest from artist-run centres to screen the program in the rest of Ontario and Canada. The first event in SAVAC's MONITOR touring program, was a Monitor 6 screening at the McIntosh Gallery in London. Following that, SAVAC presented a selection of Canadian shorts from the last 7 years of MONITOR, for a screening at the Winnipeg Film Group's Cinematheque. The screening was reviewed in Winnipeg's UPTOWN Mag.

Debashis Sinha: *The Known World* / 4 November - 4 December, Toronto Free Gallery

Debashis Sinha's multi-channel audio installation *icefield* was the anchor of SAVAC's solo project. The work explored how we can subvert the conventions of digital audio and video manipulation and the glitch aesthetic to reflect a more nuanced and gentle perspective on our inner life and the natural world. The exhibition also included *he sat on a glittering precipice* and *cloudfield 1.0*. Audio discs were produced in place of traditional paper invitations, and SAVAC also commissioned an essay by Darren Copeland, to accompany the project. The show was profiled in Weekly Voice and was selected by Now Magazine as a must-see.

The Museum of Found Objects: Toronto (Maharaja and — —) / 5 February – 3 April. Art Gallery of Ontario

SAVAC partnered with the AGO for its sixth installment of the Toronto Now series at the Young Gallery. We invited artists and collaborators Sameer Farooq and Mirjam Linschooten to create a response to the AGO's blockbuster exhibition *Maharaja: The Splendour of India's Royal Courts*. Following up their Istanbul project of the same title, the artists created an archive of everyday objects, fuelled by Toronto's south asian neighbourhoods—Etobicoke, Scarborough and Brampton. The exhibition challenged a museological portrayal of "culture" by introducing non-precious, surprising, and mundane objects into a place of importance. The opening night saw a packed gallery, and the show was profiled on Huffington Post and Radio Canada International. On the last day of the exhibition, the artists invited the public to loot the museum. By day's end, the vitrines were left empty, and funnily enough, many of the looters were staff at the AGO! A generous donation from Julia Ouellette allowed for the publication of an artist book a few months later, with design by Sameer Farooq, and a series of notes by Haema Sivanesan. The Toronto book launch at Stella bar saw over 40 books sold. A second book launch took place at Albion Shopping Centre in Etobicoke, where many of the objects were found. Armed with samosas and mango juice, we managed to give away almost 100 books to passerbys. The book is currently for sale from SAVAC, or at the AGO Shop and Art Metropole. It was also showcased at the New York Book Fair in 2011.

Monitor 7: *New South Asian Short Film and Video* / 24 March, Innis Town Hall, Toronto

On 24 March, SAVAC's annual short film and video screening program entered its seventh year. The program by artist & curator Ayesha Hameed featured works by The Torontonians, Nahed Mansour, Sharmila Samant and internationally acclaimed artists Karen Mirza and Brad Butler. The Globe and Mail's R.M. Vaughan published a lengthy review praising the program, and the screening itself was sold out. The program toured to Niagara Artists' Centre in St. Catharines.

programming report (cont'd) ...

Gauri Gill: The Americans / 1 May – 31 July, 2011. Mississauga Central Library

In partnership with Culture Division at the City of Mississauga, SAVAC presented a selection of photographs, titled *The Americans*, by the internationally renowned artist, Gauri Gill. In *The Americans* Gill takes the USA as her subject, but through a new lens of cultural specificity, with a focus on South Asian communities in a pre- and post-9/11 landscape. The show was a featured exhibition for the CONTACT Photography Festival, and was selected by the *Globe and Mail* as one of the top 10 shows to see during the festival. To accompany the exhibition, SAVAC commissioned an essay by Sarah Parsons, Assoc. Professor in the Dept. of Visual Arts, at York University. A number of outreach programs, including a photography workshop, were also held in conjunction with the exhibition.

The Annual / 9 July – 21 August, Living Arts Centre, Mississauga

The annual juried member's show comprised of varying media and showcased our member's new works. The opening was received well and with almost 100 people in attendance, and coverage in the *Mississauga News*. The show brought together work by long-time SAVAC members — Afshin Matlabi, Heidi McKenzie, Smiriti Mehra, Surendra Lawoti, and newer members Anne Devitt, Pudy Tong, Mona Sharma, Janine Ramlochan and Tahireh Lal. We enjoyed a wonderful partnership with the Living Arts Centre, and Gallery curator, Cole Swanson. *aftermodern.* lab generously provided the design for the exhibition publication.

some of our upcoming programs ...

Monitor 8: New South Asian Short Film & Video / 22 March 2012. Innis Town Hall, Toronto

The eighth year of MONITOR is programmed by internationally renowned curator, Jacob Korczynski, and will include work by artists from Mumbai, Amsterdam, Vancouver, and more!

Shifting Planes of Performance (working title) / April 2012, Toronto

SAVAC is pleased to co-present Montreal-based artist Ali El Darsa, in a one night performance in April. The event will augment a series of discussions, curated by Swapnaa Tamhane and Stephanie Springgay, in partnership with OISE and York University.

Tamil Film Screening (working title) / May 2012, University of Toronto at Scarborough

SAVAC is teaming up with the International Tamil Film Festival and the Doris McCarthy Gallery at UTSC, to present a programmed selection of Tamil films from the last decade of the film festival. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion and reception.

outreach and membership activities ...

Why should I apply for a grant / 30 October, 2010

SAVAC invited two Ontario Arts Council officers – Bushra Junaid & Lisa Wöhrle – to discuss the different aspects of applying for OAC funding. Practicing artists Aneela Dias-D’Souza and longstanding SAVAC member, Samina Mansuri, talked about their experiences as recipients of various grants, and the impact these had on their careers. The workshop was extremely well-received, with first-time applicants, as well as mid-career and established arts professionals in attendance.

Jump Ship: Dinner and artist talk with Sumugan Sivanesan / 14 January, 2011

SAVAC was a partner for Toronto Free Gallery’s first event in their *The Bridge series*—sit down dinners and conversations about gaps in racial, social and economic inequality. Australian artist Sumugan Sivanesan was invited to discuss his ficto-critical approach to issues of race, migration and the legacies of colonialism, relating to current concerns in both Canada and Australia. The title project, *Jump Ship*, looked at the often obscure history of ‘Las-cars’—sailors of South Asian descent who worked colonial ships—and the effect of Indian dissent on the European imagination. The sold-out dinner brought together members of SAVAC and TFG, as well as artists, academics and friends from the wider Toronto community.

State Your Case: writing effective artist statements and exhibition proposals / 29 January, 2011

As part of our ongoing professional development for members, we invited Barbara Gilbert to give a workshop on the details of the artist statement. The small group setting allowed participants to discuss their practice and language in depth, while gaining an understanding of the different contexts, and uses of the artist statement.

Artist talk with Brendan Fernandes / 8 March, 2011

Following SAVAC’s AGM, longtime member and Sobey-award nominee Brendan Fernandes talked about his career path over the past few years. Emerging artist, Johnson Ngo, gave an introduction, in which he described Fernandes as a fellow artist, and mentor. The two met when Ngo took part in a 2009 performance workshop that Fernandes conducted for SAVAC’s acclaimed 2009 exhibition *South-South: Interruptions and Encounters*.

Better Photography / 25 June, 2011

In conjunction with *The Americans*, we invited esteemed photographer and SAVAC member, Surendra Lawoti, to conduct a photography workshop. Following a short introduction, participants were given guidelines and then invited to shoot a series of photographs in Mississauga’s Celebration Square. Following the workshop, Culture Division at the City of Mississauga generously hosted a small exhibit of selected images.

Members Day in Mississauga / 9 July, 2011

SAVAC organized a members’ information session. Paula Paoletto of Mississauga’s Culture Division spoke in depth about the various programs and opportunities available to members in the city. Cole Swanson discussed the various programs and residencies at the Living Arts Centre, while ceramic artist Ishrat Suhrwardy gave a personal account of her own experience as resident artist at the LAC.

VELOCITY: THE RATE OF CHANGE OF POSITION
Opening reception of the annual juried members' exhibition, at Function 13 Gallery in Toronto



"... HEART ..."
Haema Sivanesan & Khadim Ali with Tom MacDonald (Consul General of Canada, Sydney), Tania Creighton, UTS Gallery Director, Luca Belgiorno-Nettis, Chairman, Biennale of Sydney, Peter Booth, Acting Vice-Chancellor, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia
Jayce Salloum at Plug In ICA, Winnipeg



MONITOR
Jamelie Hassan and Richard Fung at the MONITOR 6 reception in London.
The poster for MONITOR: CANADIAN SHORTS, which screened in Winnipeg



THE KNOWN WORLD
by Debashis Sinha, at Toronto Free Gallery. Installation view of ICEFIELD (front) and CLOUDFIELD 1.0 (back).



JUMP SHIP

Dinner and artist talk with Sumugan Sivanesan, in partnership with Toronto Free Gallery.

The artist with Ali Kazimi Sketch for JUMP SHIP tattoo performance (courtesy the artist).



THE MUSEUM OF FOUND OBJECTS: TORONTO (MAHARAJAH AND —) by Sameer Farooq and Mirjam Linschooten.

The sixth exhibition in the AGO's Toronto Now Series, at the Young Gallery.

Catalogue image (courtesy of the artists)

Installation view (photo by Alex vs. Alex).

Poster for LOOT THE MUSEUM (courtesy the artists).



AR and her daughter ER hid in the closet so that the people ringing the doorbell would think that no one was home.



GAURI GILL: THE AMERICANS

The artist at the opening reception.
Installation view.
Poster for the exhibition.

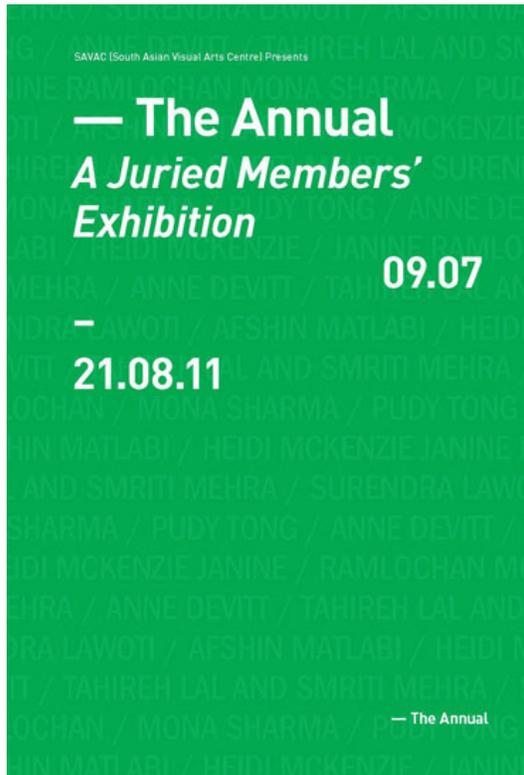


BETTER PHOTOGRAPHY workshop with Surendra Lawoti, in partnership with Culture Division, City of Mississauga.

PARTICIPANT IMAGES:
Self portrait by Hitesh Shah.
Portrait by Bhupendra Rai.



THE ANNUAL
Juried members' exhibition at the Living Arts Centre.
Catalogue designed by aftermodern.lab



from the board of directors — treasurer's report ...

Dear Members:

2011 was a monumental year for SAVAC yet again, heralded most significantly with our partnership with the Art Gallery of Ontario, serving to raise our profile to new heights. Our finances continued to be expertly managed by outgoing Executive Director Haema Sivanesan, and due to careful and preemptive planning, the transition period to the new ED (Ambereen Siddiqui) was minimally disruptive to the office staff, who must be praised for their professionalism and determination to continue to raise the reputation of excellence that SAVAC has achieved, during this transition period.

Overall SAVAC remains in a stable financial position as of 2011, but faces many challenges. The past few years has seen a decline in the charitable giving sector, as well as a reduction in arts funding overall at federal, provincial and municipal levels. Though SAVAC has not been affected by such funding reductions, the staff and Board are acutely aware of the environment that SAVAC operates in and are seeking to diversify and broaden our funding base by embarking on a Donor Cultivation Program.

On a personal note, this AGM represents my last as a board member and as the Treasurer of SAVAC. I have completed my second 2-year term and as of this meeting will cease to be a board member, and resign my post as Treasurer. The past 4 years has been an explosively educational and fulfilling time. The people I met, the skills I learnt, and the memories, I have will truly last me for many, many years to come. SAVAC is a global leader in the arts sector, the cultural sector, and in arts programming worldwide and the contributions that this organization has made to the critical cultural fabric of Canada is immeasurable.

In closing I quote the words of an artist and SAVAC Member that encapsulates how I feel about SAVAC:

“Somewhere in this vast country there is a small arts organization working tirelessly to produce exhibitions and other projects that have a global reach and pervasive importance. This is SAVAC.” — Jayce Salloum

Tavinder Channa
Treasurer, Board of Directors
SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre)

summary of financial statements ...

	2011	2010
REVENUE		
Grants	\$ 186, 616	\$ 222, 400
Private Sector	\$ 10, 957	\$ 14, 706
Donations	\$ 3, 420	—
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$ 200, 982</i>	<i>\$ 237, 106</i>
EXPENSES		
Programs	\$ 128, 900	\$ 149, 479
Administration	\$ 67, 234	\$ 90, 364
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$ 196, 134</i>	<i>\$ 239, 843</i>
<i>Excess of expenses over revenue</i>	—	\$ (2, 737)
<i>Excess of revenue over expenses</i>	\$ 4, 847	—

The fiscal year ending August 31, 2011 marks another successful year of SAVAC's operations as a Charitable Organization. We are pleased to report that we secured \$3,420 in donations. Revenue generated through membership renewals has increased with our ability to now accept payments online. Our grant revenue is slightly lower this year due to us transitioning out of Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) funding.

Despite the reduction in grant revenue, we were able to generate a marginal surplus through contained costs in professional administrative fees and in our education and outreach programming.

SAVAC remains very prudent in its financial management practices, both in its day-to-day operations, as well as in its long term planning. We would like to thank Ghufuran Sallay and David Burkes for their invaluable financial advice.