

ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE FINAL DECADE

A UTOPIAN STAGE

Curated by Vali Mahlouji

A Utopian Stage

*a cultural atlas
excavated archives of Festival of Arts
a ilm programme
a transnationally roving amphitheatre*

A Utopian Stage is a project in four distinct acts incorporating a cultural atlas of utopian ideals, an archival exhibition of performance, a performance arena and a film programme.

A Utopian Stage revisits the radical aspirations of the hyper-modernist networks of artists, thinkers, cultural practitioners and experimentalists that defined the 1960s and 1970s. It is a multifaceted project, journeying through modernism's euphoric drives: ideals of progress, openness, emancipation, inclusivity, and the overarching notion of a unity of disunities.

The artistic, cultural, political, moral and spiritual landscape of the mid-twentieth century was defined by the collapse of European hegemonies and the rise of the Global South, which opened up new horizons for contact and exchange. It allowed for a fluid artistic exchange across geographies, histories and forms in ways and on a scale that had never been possible before.



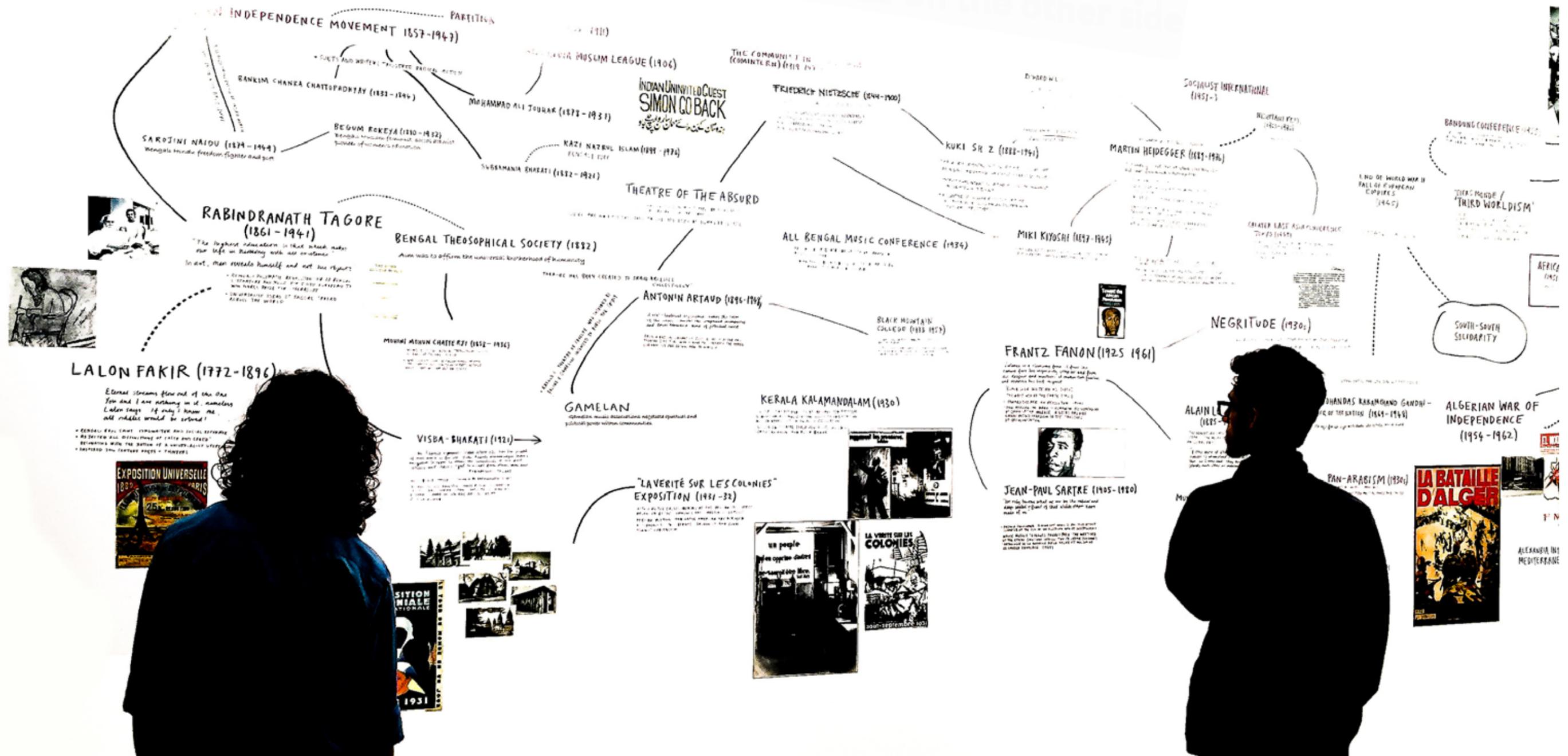
The project reconstructs a complex space of international modernity by highlighting the 'third worldist' sensibilities of the immediate post-colonial period and tracing a cultural atlas through which knowledge was exchanged across alternative (often non-European) plateaus. This process of global 'reorientation' takes us through a reconstruction of the gaze - subverting the single 'reading' of West to East into a more cyclical model, engaging in cultural negotiations from East to East, East to West, South to East, South to South - constructing a panoramic exchange of global artistic discourse.



Archaeology of the Final Decade (AOTFD) has unearthed archival materials, audio recordings and film footage which have been destroyed and remain banned since 1979. These document the revolutionary spirit of the international performance Festival of Arts.

" [It is] always most terrifying, most dangerous when elimination and erasure is done in the name of the public, or even worst in the presence of the protection of the public good."

- James Baldwin

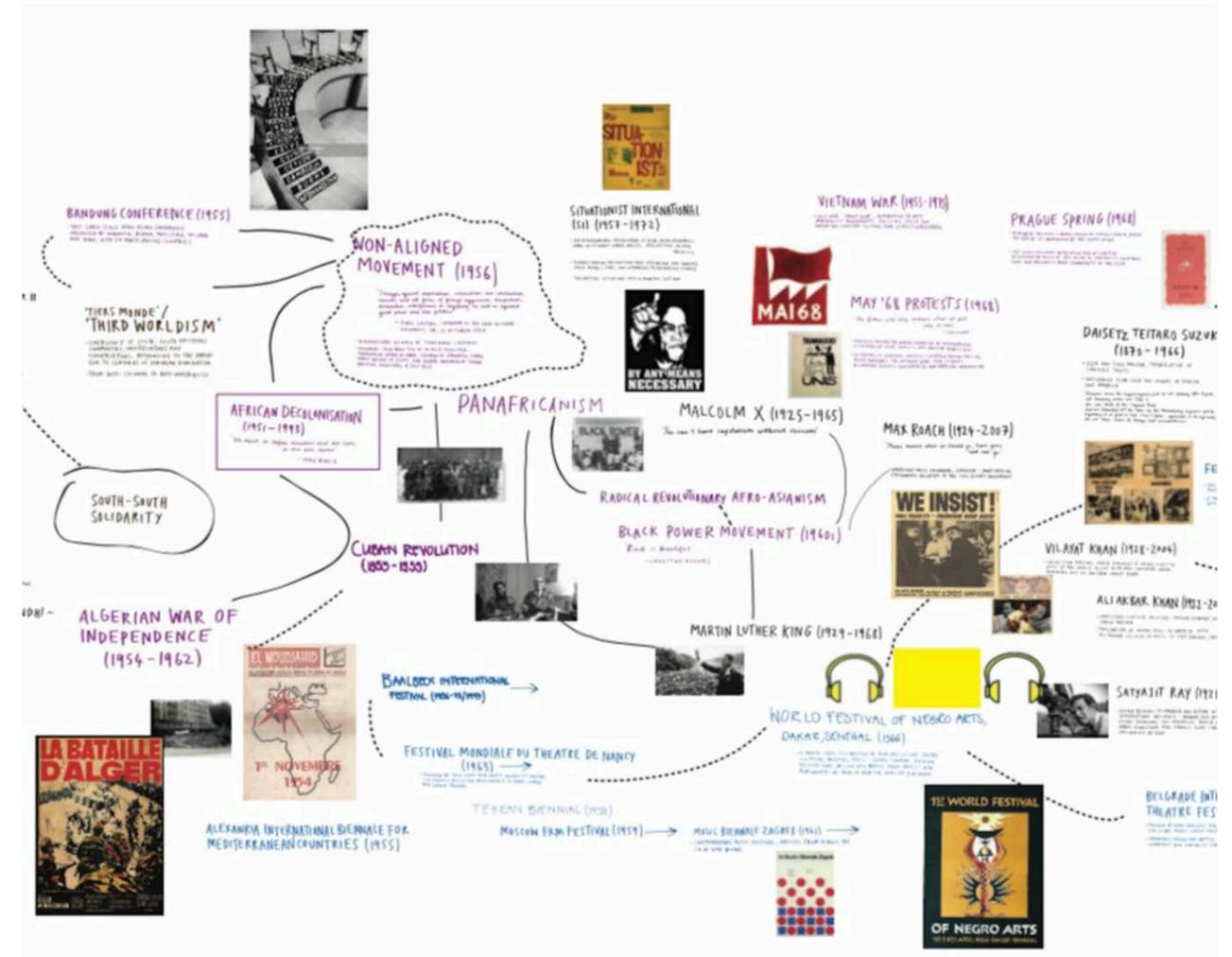


Installation photograph from A Utopian Stage at Dhaka Art Summit 2018. Courtesy of DAS '18 and Archaeology of the Final Decade.

ACT I.

A Cultural Atlas

the shifting sands of utopias



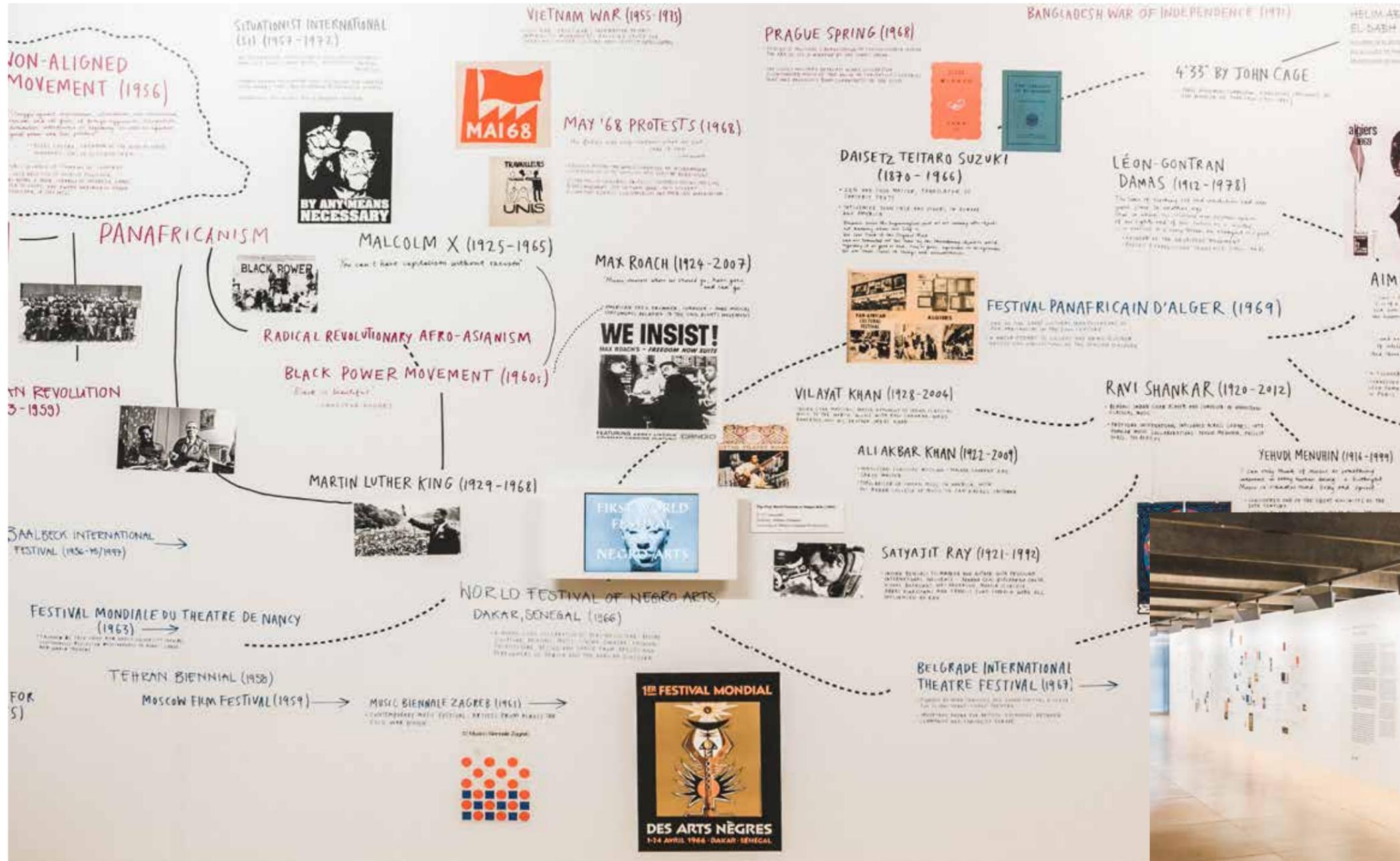
The interactive and ongoing *Cultural Atlas* conjures a fragmented history of the long twentieth century through the ambitions and contradictions of countless utopian universalist episodes and ideals: transcendental internationalisms; radical liberations; emancipating solidarities.

As a panorama of the intellectual history of the twentieth century, the Atlas reflects utopian and emancipatory intellectual artistic, political, ethical, and spiritual international networks, revisiting the intersection of modernism, art and revolution through radical aspirations of the twentieth century.

It remains an unfinished and ongoing process that expands its constellations, connecting practices that borrowed from, and contributed to, the universal pool of transcendental and emancipatory impulses of the twentieth century.



Installation photograph from Dhaka Art Summit 2018. Courtesy of DAS '18 and Archaeology of the Final Decade.



By the middle of the last century, the demise of the old European empires revealed a new horizon of opportunities and encounters for people and cultures across the world. The atlas serves as an evocation of the constantly evolving dreams and possibilities that emerged and dissolved during the period.

Intending to be a living object the *Cultural Atlas* mutates with each re-installment. It remains a deliberately unfixed, unfinished and unstable process – like the ideas and connections it conjures – intending to be animated by the spaces that it arrives in. To that effect, the *Cultural Atlas* is a live object. Audiences are encouraged to interrupt, intercept and shape the colour and tone of its evolution, and to expand its cosmos by proposing new links and initiating new constellations, unearthing the shifting sites of utopias across the twentieth century, based on their local context and experience.

ACT II.

Excavated Archives: Festival of Arts Shiraz- Persepolis

thrust open the heavens and start anew

Archaeology of the Final Decade (AOTFD) unearths the archival materials of the radical and virtually-forgotten decade-long Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis (1967-1977). Over fifty years since its inception, A Utopian Stage explores the genealogies and implications of the festival's modernist ambitions, using it as a lens through which to reconsider the legacies of modernism's radical progressive arc. Embodying an optimistic drive to reimagine the world as an open universal arena for mutual exchange, the festival exalted in the dawn of the post-colonial age, aspiring to new solidarities and connections which marked the emergence of a potential new world.

Situating the festival against the background of contemporaneous political events and movements like the Non-Aligned Movement and Pan-Africanism, we examine how Shiraz-Persepolis acted as a contested site of competing solidarities and proliferating visions of an interconnected world; and how, importantly, it facilitated the encounter between international and local avant-gardes. It is precisely the festival's pronounced rejection of a tension-less,



Caigula, Albert Camus (playwright), Arby Ovanessian (director), Kargah-e Namayesh, Persepolis, 1974. Courtesy of Mehdi Khonsari / Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

homogenizing fusion of cultures, and its alignment with the principles of particularism, cultural difference, and alterity that demand our attention today. For these qualities make the festival not only a unique historical object but point to the still latent possibilities of the utopian impulses that marked the cross-cultural histories of art and anti-colonial struggle in the 1960s and 1970s.

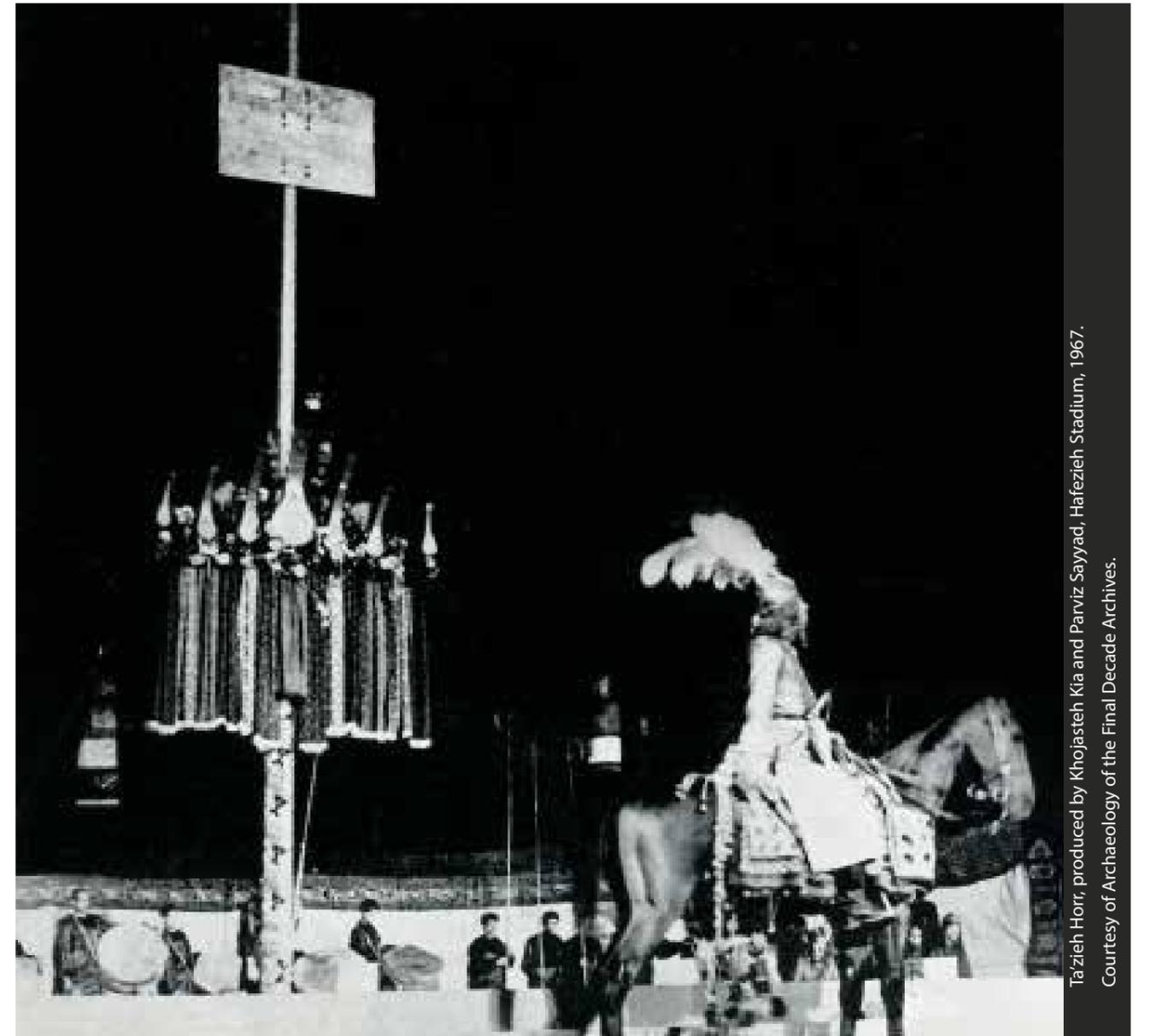
The festival itself was targeted and attacked through moralising, religious accusations of decadence, obscenity and blasphemy in 1977 by Islamists and was subsequently banned in Iran in 1979. Many of the artists involved were banned from work and its archives were destroyed or removed and remain banned to date.

AOTFD's painstaking retrieval of those archives aims to push back those accusations to reveal a seminal modernist event in line with the euphoric drives and ideals of progress, openness, emancipation, inclusivity, and the overarching notion of a unity of disunities.

episode one.

reinvigorating local art forms

Unlocking the potential of the indigenous and unleashing the power of ethnic particularism were inextricably linked to the dream of advancing contemporary reality. The immediate post-colonial period was marked by radical drives to sever the colonial experience by reinvigorating notions of nativism and encouraging intellectual and cultural returns to the authentic self. The festival consciously sought to destabilise and challenge the hegemonic Eurogenetic view of culture by emancipating the indigenous. It turned to oxygenation and edification of the cultural space by examining indigenous alternatives and putting local art forms through a self-confrontation. The process of rediscovery was galvanised per an exchange focussed on Asia and Africa. The core mission became to shift the centre of gravity of cultural production and politics towards the present and the re-emerging other, where the 'ethnic other' could take the lead - an equalising call for a 'third world re-writing'.



Ta'zieh Horr, produced by Khojasteh Kia and Parviz Sayyad, Hafezieh Stadium, 1967.
Courtesy of Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

The 'return to the self' opposed the Heideggerian notion of horizontal time as an inauthentic temporal structure. It embraced, conversely, cyclical and vertical models of time which circumvented dichotomous representations of the modern and the traditional and focused, instead, on achieving a fertile dialectical between values of permanence and change, eternal and new.

Critical evaluations of local modes encompassed a wide archaic/contemporary genealogical spectrum ranging from indigenous ta'zieh ritual performances and commedia dell'arte style ru-howzi chamber pieces to a new wave of culturally unconventional expressions, which saw the premiering of two seminal pieces in 1968 - Abbas Nalbandian's *Pazhouheshi (Research...)* and Bijan Mofid's *Shahr-e Qesseh (City of Tales)*.



Shahr-e Qesseh (City of Tales), Bijan Mofid (playwright & director), from left: Soheil Souzani, Mehdi Ali Beigi, Jamileh Nedai, Mahmood Ostad Mohamad, Rashid Kanaani, commissioned by the Festival, University Hajr / Bijan Mofid Foundation / Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.



Caligula, Albert Camus (playwright), Arby Ovanessian (director), Kargah-e Namayesh, Persepolis, 1974. Courtesy of Mehdi Khonsari / Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

episode two.

equalising, unifying and universalising through sound

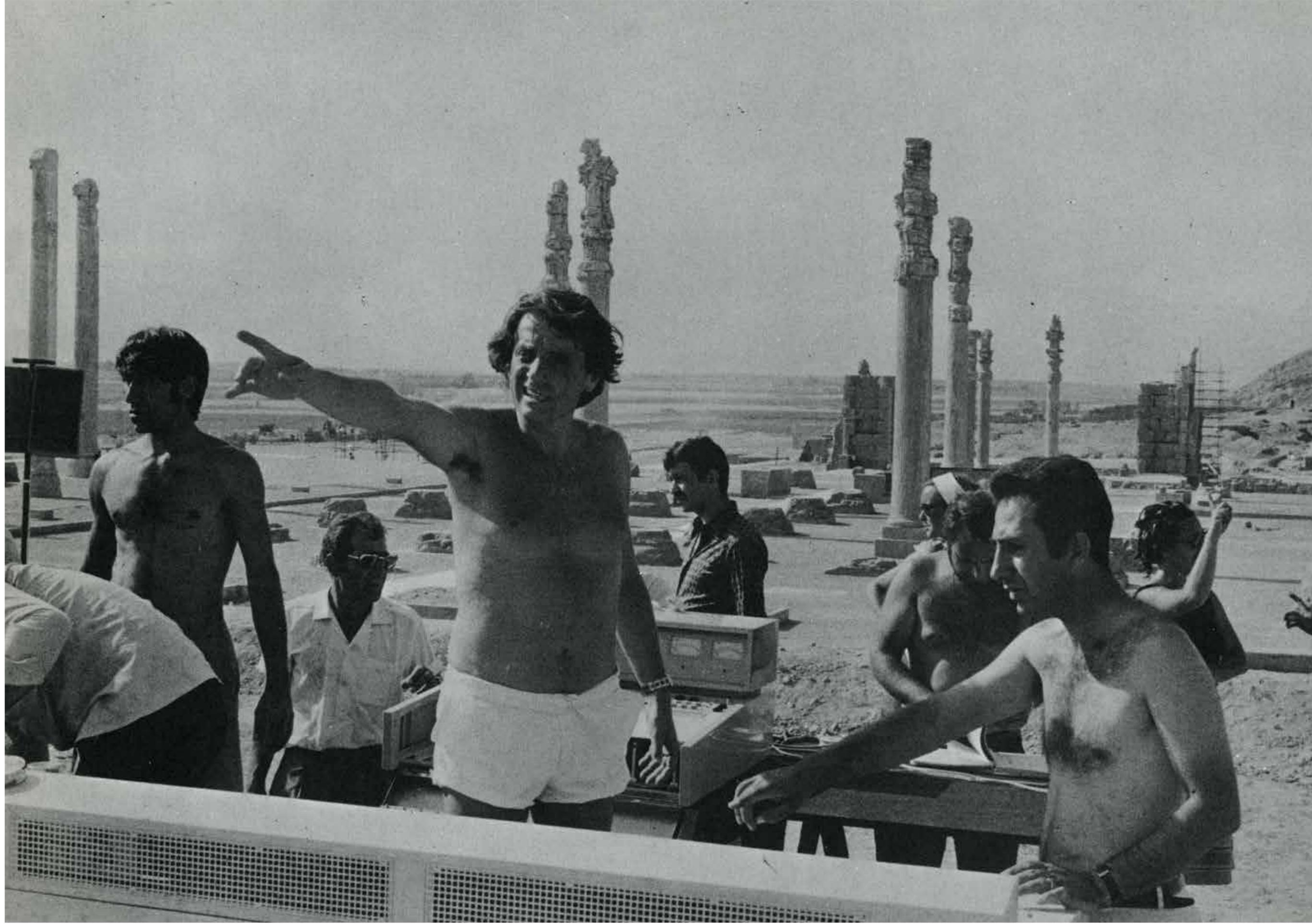
By 1969, the festival became determined to create an attitude of defiance against the dominant cultural hegemonies and hierarchies of times before. Circumstantially, the festival designed opportunities for artists to investigate shared roots of drama, music and performance around coexisting heterogeneities, temporally and aesthetically.

The festival chose *Percussion* as its theme in order to exploit a repository where non-European expressions were highly developed. Percussive forms have been identified as the oldest and most basic of instrumental types, indigenous to all cultures. Rhythm, as the most fundamental ingredient to all music, signified a return to basics and resonated with elemental instinctual drives. The festival insisted on a ruthless and dynamic progression, constituting an international sonic narrative - one that specifically emphasised the skill and sophistication of South Asian and African percussives - with notions of unification and universalism as the new norm.



Rwanda Drum Ensemble, Open-Air Theatre, 1969, Courtesy of Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

The theme facilitated a varied and fluid programming that included Balinese gamelan *Gong Keybar* musicians and dancers, Indian musicians Debabrata Chaudhuri and *kathak* dancer Uma Sharma Faiyaz Khan, Iranian *tombak* players Jamshid Shemirani and Hossein Tehrani, American jazz percussionist Max Roach Quintet & Abbey Lincoln, and the Rwanda Drum Ensemble (on its first Asian appearance). Experimental musician Iannis Xenakis was commissioned to create *Persephassa*, a site-specific composition, which premiered in the ruins of Persepolis with the Les Percussions de Starsbourg for the closing event.



Iannis Xenakis (composer) in preparations for the premiere of *Persepolis* music and light spectacle, Persepolis, 1971. Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.



Traditional Iranian Percussion, Faramarz Payvar (*santur*), Hossein Tehrani (*tombak*), Hafezieh, 1969. Courtesy of Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.



Uma Sharma performing Kathak, Classical Indian Dances, Open Air Theatre, 1969. Courtesy of Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.



Legong Keraton Dance, Balinese Gamelan and Traditional Dances, Persepolis, 1969. Courtesy of Malie Letrange / Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

episode three.

emancipating the universal ecstatic powers of ritual

On the cuff of the transcendental successes of 1969, the festival proceeded to further disentangle itself from the old order and to write scripts anew with aspirations towards a new cultural order. The 1970 festival was organised around the theme of Theatre and Ritual. Investigations into ritual promised release of universal ecstatic powers and insight into the unconscious world of the collective on the basis that it brought theatre closer to its essence. Ideals of catharsis and a connection with the emotional core of drama were unifying underlying drives. Furthermore, the performative, represented by the 'primitive' was pitched to supplant the textual, as a deliberate retraction from the European tradition, towards a purer 'poor theatre'.



Fire, Peter Schumann (creator and director), Bread & Puppet Theatre, TV Hall, 1970.
Courtesy of Bread and Puppet Theatre / Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

A wide range of expressions included: influential Polish creator Jerzy Grotowski with Calderon's *The Constant Prince*; adaptation of Gorgani's verse *Vis-o-Ramin*, by Mahin Tajadod and director Arby Ovanessian; Jean Genet's *Les Bonnes* by director Victor Garcia and Compañia Núria Espert; *Fire*, by Bread & Puppet Theatre directed by Peter Schumann; *ta'zieh* of *Moslem ibn Aqeel*; classical *sitar* by Ravi Shankar and classical Indian dance by Yamini Krishnamurti.

"'Ritual theatre' was the theme of the Fourth Festival an appropriate choice since Asia still remains a rich storehouse of ritual and ceremony and after a long period of lack of interest, the West is once again rediscovering its roots in Asian arts. Shiraz was the ideal meeting place for the purpose."



Vis-o-Ramin, Mahin Tajaddod (play adaptation of Gorgani's 11th century verse), Arby Ovanesian (director), Persepolis, 1970. Courtesy of Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

THEATRE OF RITUAL



FESTIVAL OF ARTS SHIRAZ 27 AUG. 6 SEP. 70
PERSEPOLIS

2nd FESTIVAL CONFERENCE OF

THE THIRD
WORLD
THEATRE



برای جشنواره - هنرهای نمایشی
تئاتر جهان
تئاتر سوم

جشنواره هنر - تئاتر - سوم - شیراز - شهریور ۱۳۵۲
FESTIVAL OF ARTS SHIRAZ SEPTEMBER 73

episode four.

consolidating a nexus for modernising nativists mingling with ritualising modernists

By 1971 the festival was operating meta-politically across the 'first' and 'third' worlds, pursuing universalist utopian modernity through performance, sight and sounds. It actively supported modernisers from the 'Third World' who were keen to base their investigations on native rituals, traditions and folklores, in the pursuit of authenticity. It juxtaposed that process of discovery, deconstruction and reorientation with the concerns of the internationally fluid and subversive avant-garde, whose modernity sought to liberate itself from the constraints and stabilities of its individual traditions.

The festival became an authentic nexus for 'third worldist' modernising drives that rooted themselves in a compost of local tradition, folklore and ritual and the international modernists who were experimenting with ritualisations and encounters with other cultures in an effort to break away from the strictures of European artistic tradition.



The Contsant Prince, Calderon (playwright), Jerzy Grotowski, (director), Polish Theatre Laboratory, Delgosha Pavilion, 1970. Courtesy of the aetrists / Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

A broadly shared sensibility of these investigators was expressing not through conventional emotional routes but by striking elemental chords that released cathartic and ecstatic powers. The festival became, by design and by default the bedrock of exactly such praeternatural investigations.

episode five.

creating *orghast*

The experiences of *Theatre and Ritual* at the 4th Festival informed the creation of the seminal work *Orghast* in 1971. *Orghast* was collectively directed by Peter Brook, Arby Ovanessian, Andrei Serban and Geoffrey Reeves, and written by poet Ted Hughes and linguist and dramaturg Mahin Tajadod. It was a site-specific commission and first major research project for the Paris-based International Centre for Theatre Research. Twenty-five performers hailed from Cameroon, Iran, Japan, France, UK, Mali, Spain, Portugal and USA.

In a return to ancients, Tajadod and Hughes invented a language for *Orghast* based on Middle Persian Avestan and ancient Greek. Incomprehensible to the modern audience, its primary intention was the omission of text as carrier of symbolic meaning. Attainment of meaning would transcend the need for rational discourse and bring the audience to alternate modes of consciousness, forming a new community beyond any fixed, stable identity.

“The point was to create a precise but open and inviting language, inviting to a lost world we wanted to explore. Music is one such language - mathematically precise, but completely mysterious and open, giving access to a deeper world, closed to direct analysis.... If you imagine music buried in the earth for a few thousand years, decayed back to its sources, not the perfectly structured thing we know as music, then that is what we tried to unearth. A language belonging below the levels where differences appear, close to the inner life of what we've chosen as our material, but expressive to all people, powerfully, truly, precisely.”

– Ted Hughes interview, quoted in Albert Hunt and Geoffrey Reeves, *Directors in Perspective*, Peter Brook, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) p. 157



Orghast Part II, Ted Hughes and Mahin Tajadod (playwrights) Peter Brook (co-director with Arby Ovanessian, Geoffrey Reeves, Andrei Serban), International Centre for Theatre Research, commissioned by the Festival and the French Ministry of Culture, Nagsh-e Rostam, Ka'be Zartosht, 1971. Courtesy of Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives..



Orghast Part II, Ted Hughes and Mahin Tadjadod (playwrights) Peter Brook (co-director with Arby Ovanessian, Geoffrey Reeves, Andrei Serban), International Centre for Theatre Research, commissioned by the Festival and the French Ministry of Culture, Naqsh-e Rostam, Kab-e Zartosht, 1971. Courtesy of Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives..

episode six.

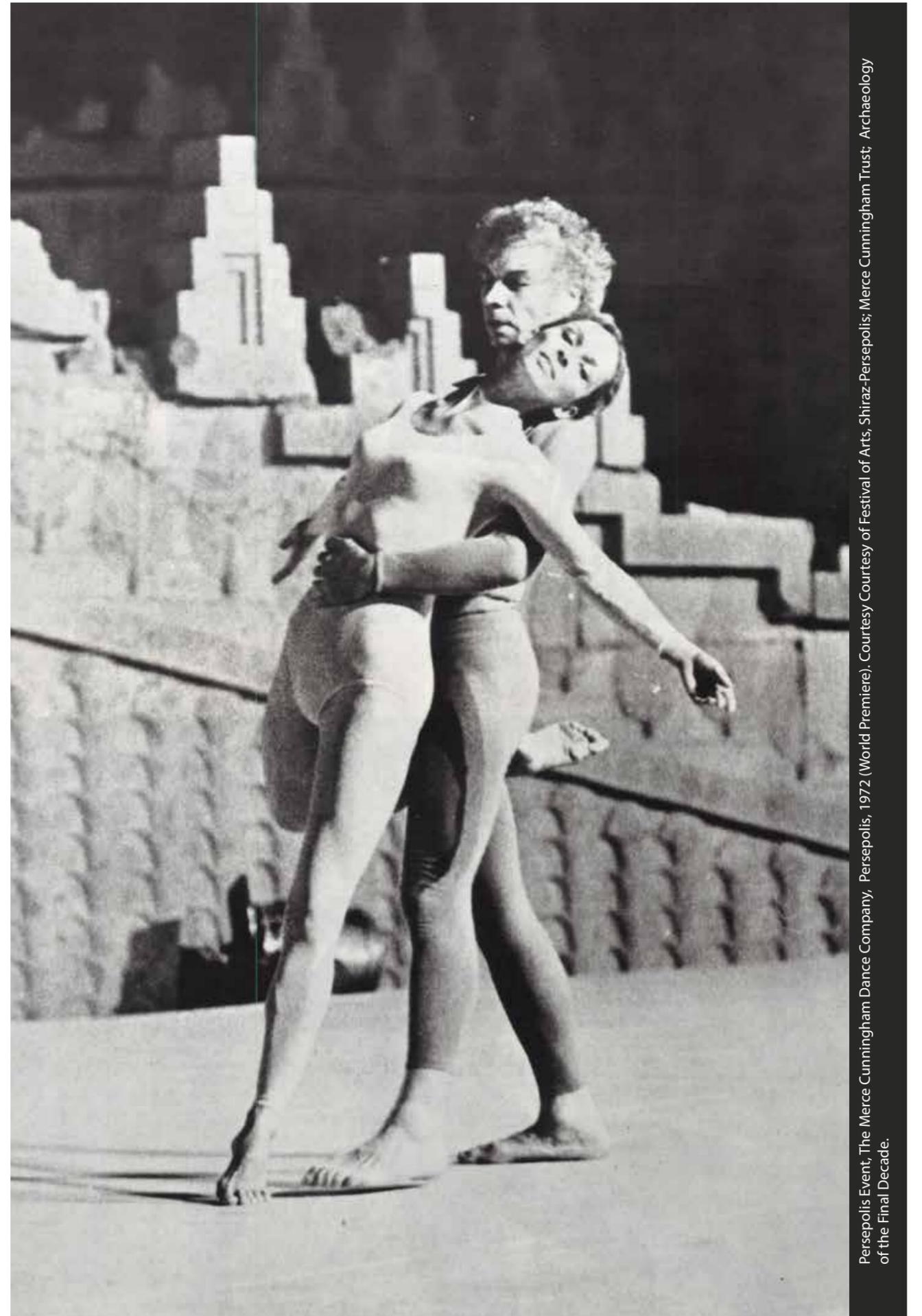
co-opting the avant-garde in reversing the transmissions of knowledge

In 1972 the festival brought several distinctive European and American experimental practitioners into proximity with the Asian traditions to which they were indebted. John Cage had studied with Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, a theologian of Zen Buddhism. With Merce Cunningham they drew inspiration from *I Ching (Book of Changes)* to explore notions of chance and indeterminacy. Karlheinz Stockhausen's compositions aimed at reaching a state of inner ascetism and spirituality correlating with philosophies of Hinduism.

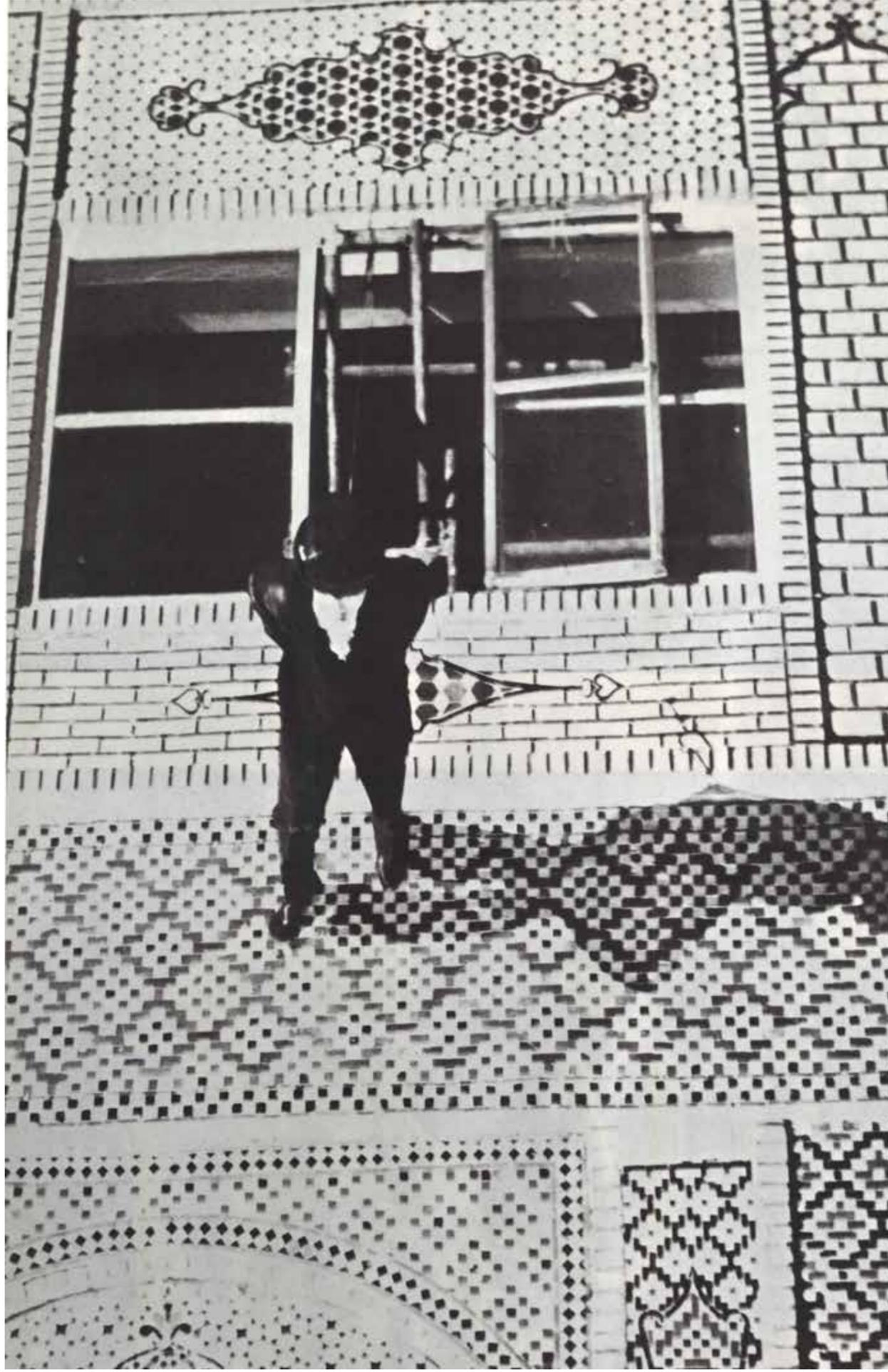
The curation underscored the reverse transmission of knowledge from the periphery to the centre, highlighting the depth and continuity of Asian philosophical influence on European and American modernist movements. The festival directors drew historical parallels with earlier intercultural influences, referring to Antonin Artaud's development of theories and practices that investigated a relationship to signs rather than words, based on his observations of Balinese dance.

"With the recent involvement of the Third World, a new perspective has been opened.... World theatre seems even closer to achieving the goals set by the visionary Artaud. . . An important trend of the avant-garde is devoted to developing this kind of expression for an intercultural audience."

- 8th Festival of Arts Programme (1974); Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives



Persepolis Event, The Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Persepolis, 1972 (World Premiere). Courtesy of Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis; Merce Cunningham Trust; Archaeology of the Final Decade.



Origin of Blood, Shuji Terayama (creator and director), Tenjo Sajiki Theatre Laboratory, Delgoshia Garden, 1973. Courtesy of Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis; Archaeology of the Final Decade.



KA MOUNTAIN AND GUARDENIA TERRACE, a story about a family and some people changing, Robert Wilson and the Byrd Hoffman School of Byrds, Qavam House, 1972. Courtesy of Bahman Jalali / Byrd Hoffman Water Mill Foundation / Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.



Mantra, composed by Karlheinz Stockhausen, piece for 2 pianists, Alfons & Aloys Kontarsky, Stockhausen Panorama, Saray-e Moshir, 1972. Courtesy of Stockhausen-Stiftung für Musik / Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

episode seven.

promoting the case of africa

The festival became one of the first international platforms with a focus on African cultural emancipations and the inclusion of indigenous African forms of dance and drama.

A new post-colonial generation of African dramatists, including the well-known Nigerian Duro Ladipo, drew upon indigenous traditions and mythologies. These investigations focused on national revivalist drives within an intercultural discourse which resonated with the directions of the Festival. Artists from Senegal, Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda, all of which gained independence in the early 1960s, represented ritual and contemporary cultural expressions.

The Ballet National du Sénégal participated with traditional dances and music in the 4th Festival in 1970, followed by L'Ensemble Lyrique du Senegal in 1976. Duro Ladipo's famous opera *Oba Ko So* - a dramatisation of the Yoruba story of *Shango the King of Thunder* - was staged in 1973.



Renga Moi, African Dance-Drama, Robert Serumaga (playwright and director), National Theatre of Ugandan, Saray-e Moshir, 1975. Courtesy of: Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives..

Robert Serumaga's contemporary dance-drama *Renga Moi* returned to the legend of Acoli.

With the inclusion of these artists, the Festival implicitly entered into an intercultural dialogue with contemporaneous African platforms, most notably the First World Festival of Negro Arts (1966) in Dakar and the Festival panafricain d'Alger (1969).



Ballet National du Senegal, Music and Dance, A diverse ethnic musical map of Senegal, Open-Air Theatre, 1970. Courtesy of Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.



Oba Ko So (The King Did Not Hang), Duro Ladipo (playwright and director) – University Hall, 1973. Courtesy of Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

ACT III.

The Transnationally Roving Amphitheatre

below the levels where differences appear

below the levels where differences appear summons performative responses and critical conversations by an eclectic group of artists, performers, composers and thinkers who are invited to activate the contents, discourses, histories and points of reference relating to the radical and experimental spirits of the 1960s and 1970s. We invite the participants to zoom in and out of *Cultural Atlas*. The open platform of *Invocations* invites responses, interpretations and engagements with the emancipating aspirations and contradictions of 'the age of modernism and revolution' and the transcendentalisms, internationalisms and the radical desires to unlock utopian potentials.

At Dhaka Art Summit '18 *below the levels...* invited contributions from **Hassan Khan, Goshka Macuga with Vali Mahlouji, Silas Riener (Merce Cunningham Trust), Reetu Sattar, Yasmin Jahan Nupur with Santal performers, and Lalon Baul singers**. It took place in Bangladesh sponsored and presented by Dhaka Art Summit '18 and part-funded by Liverpool Biennial 2018 and New North and South.



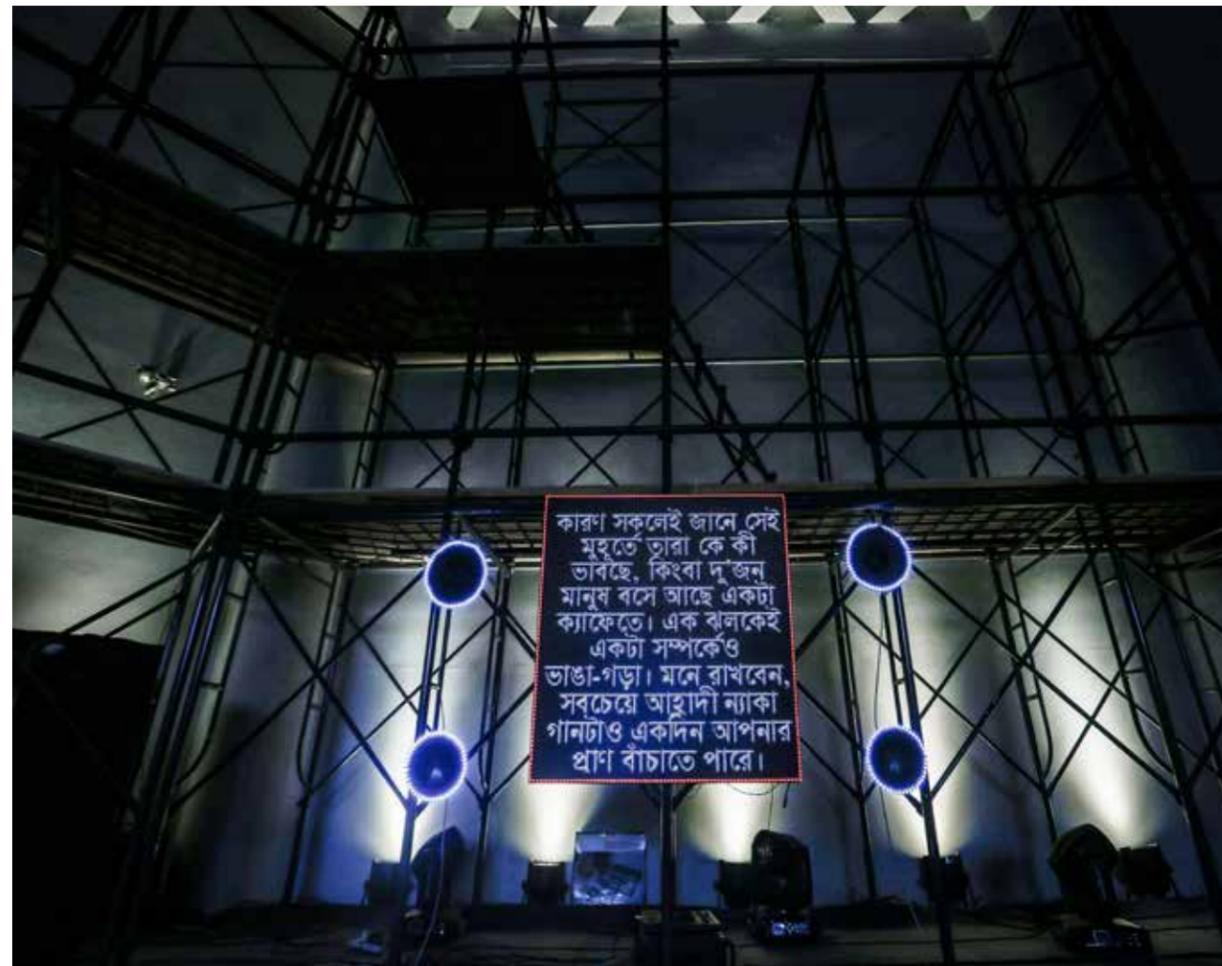
Harano Sur (Lost Tune), Reetu Sattar, performed at Dhaka Art Summit 2018.
Courtesy of the artist, DAS '18, Liverpool Biennial 2018, New North and South
and Archaeology of the Final Decade.



Like water on hot rocks, Goshka Macuga and Vali Mahlouji, performed at Dhaka Art Summit 2018.
Courtesy of the artist, DAS '18, Liverpool Biennial 2018, New North and South and Archaeology of the Final
Decade.



Field Dances,, Merce Cunningham, performance conducted by Silas Riener at Dhaka Art Summit 2018. Courtesy of the artist, Merce Cunningham Trust, DAS '18, Liverpool Biennial 2018, New North and South and Archaeology of the Final Decade.



Purity,, Hassan Khan, performed at Dhaka Art Summit 2018. Courtesy of the artist, DAS '18, Liverpool Biennial 2018, New North and South and Archaeology of the Final Decade.



Harano Sur (Lost Tune),, Reetu Sattar, performed at Dhaka Art Summit 2018. Courtesy of the artist, DAS '18, Liverpool Biennial 2018, New North and South and Archaeology of the Final Decade.



Enej,, Yasmin Jahan Nupur with Santal performers at Dhaka Art Summit 2018. Courtesy of the artists, DAS '18, Liverpool Biennial 2018, New North and South and Archaeology of the Final Decade.



At SAVVY Contemporary the roving *Invocations* invited contributions from **Vali Mahlouji, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, Kamila Metwaly, Reetu Sattar, Simon Wachsmuth, Mohammad Salemy, Maco (4 RUDE), Drummers of Joy, Slavs & Tatars, Satch Hoyt & Earl Harvin, Jihan El-Tahri** with **Hasan El-Malik** and **Jessica Ekomane**.



ACT IV.

A Film Programme

to be free is to lose sight of the shore

to be free is to lose sight of the shore is an eclectic film programme that conflates artist films, video documentations of live performances, historical documentaries and feature films to realise an ambivalent, exuberant, universal stage, where ideas and impulses can flourish.

At Dhaka Art Summit '18 *to be free...* brought together works by diverse artists and filmmakers: **Reza Abdoh, Larry Achiampong & David Blandy, Ashish Avikunthak, Shezad Dawood, Rose English, Rose Finn-Kelcey, William Greaves, Mikhail Kalatozov, Lindsay Kemp, William Klein, Lala Rukh, Goshka Macuga, Simon Moretti, Sergei Parajanov, Gillo Pontecorvo, Ousmane Sembène, Shuji Terayama** and **Stan VanDerBeek**.



Preparatory Notes, Goshka Macuga. Courtesy of the artist



It was a time that was a time, Shezad Dawood. Courtesy of the artist



Hip-Hop Waltz of Eurydice, Reza Abdoh, Courtesy of the



Glory, Rose Finn-Kelcey, Courtesy of the artist



Ornamental Happines,, Rose English, ourtesy of the artist



The Emergency of Kali, Ashish Avikunthak, Courtesy of the artist



Exhibiting *A Utopian Stage*



Kathakali from Kerala Kalamdalam, Traditional Dance-Drama from South-West India, scenes from Ramayana and Mahabarata, Open-Air Theatre, 1968. Courtesy of Archaeology of the Final Decade Archives.

Iterations of *A Utopian Stage* by AOTFD have been exhibited at:

Asia Culture Centre (ACC), Gwangju

Part of *Solidarity Spores* exhibition
13 May - 25 October 2020

SAVVY Contemporary, Berlin

Exhibition and contemporary performance programme in framework of Maerzmusik festival fur Zeitfragen
24 March - 28 April 2019

Dhaka Art Summit '18, Dhaka

Exhibition and contemporary performance and film programme
2 February 2018 - 10 February 2018

Open Eye Gallery, Liverpool

1 February 2017 - 30 June 2017

Bergen Assembly, Biennial Foundation, Bergen

1 September - 2 October 2016

Whitechapel Gallery, London

21 April - 4 October 2015

Retracing a Utopian Stage: Festival of Arts, Shiraz – Persepolis (1967-77) was first exhibited at:

MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Rome

Part of *Unedited History (Iran 1960 – 2014)*
11 Dec 2014 – 29 March 2015

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris

Part of *Unedited History (Iran 1960 – 2014)*
16 May – 24 August 2014

archæology of █████ █████ the final decade

Vali Mahlouji is a London-based curator, founder of Archaeology of the Final Decade, independent advisor to the British Museum and director of Kaveh Golestan Estate. Mahlouji's recent work includes exhibitions at Foam Fotografiemuseum Amsterdam, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, MAXXI Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, Whitechapel Gallery, Photo London, Prince Claus Fund, Singapore International Festival of Arts, Art Dubai Modern, Bergen Triennial, Open Eye Gallery, Dhaka Art Summit '18, de la Warr Pavilion, Arnolfini, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Rohtas 2 Gallery, SAWY Contemporary, Sursock Museum, and Asia Culture Centre.

Founded in 2010, Archaeology of the Final Decade (AOTFD) is a non-profit curatorial and research platform, which researches histories of nations condemned by social displacement, cultural annihilation or deliberate disappearance. AOTFD engages with accounts of culture, which have been lost through material destruction, acts of censorship, political, economic or human contingencies. The research identifies, investigates and re-circulates significant cultural and artistic materials that have remained obscure, under-exposed, endangered, banned or in some instances destroyed. AOTFD materials have been acquired by Tate Modern, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Smithsonian Institute and Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA).

Tate Modern dedicated a room in its permanent collection – a first for an Iranian artist – for exhibiting materials from AOTFD's project Kaveh Golestan's *Prostitute* series and *Recreating the Citadel* from August 2017. AOTFD's *A Utopian Stage* at Whitechapel Gallery was nominated for Best Exhibition (Alternative Category) 2015 by the Global Fine Arts Awards.