

Archives at the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS)
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CALL FOR PROPOSALS FROM ARTISTS/DESIGNERS/HISTORIANS/CURATORS
Boundaries
An exhibition at the Archives at NCBS Gallery

Background Information

The Archives at NCBS is a public centre for the history of contemporary biology in India (<http://archives.ncbs.res.in/>). As part of its public outreach and intersections with a variety of disciplines, the Archives commissions public-facing exhibitions. **We are thrilled to announce a public call for proposals to develop ‘Boundaries,’ the working title for the third exhibition in its gallery space.**

Important dates

Feb 18 2021: Proposal submission deadline
Mar 5 2021: Short-listed applicants
Mar 12 2021 (on or before): Confirmation of winning applicant
Mar 15 – Jun 15 2021: Exhibition concept and design
Jun 15 – Jun 30 2021: Exhibition installation
Jul 1 2021 - Jan 31 2022: Exhibition is live.

Exhibition Theme: Boundaries

The theme for the third exhibition is ‘Boundaries’. The applicant is at full liberty to explore ways of approaching this theme. The past year has given us an opportunity to reflect on the idea of boundaries and how they shape behaviour and identity. While our cues for this theme came from the pandemic, your proposal does not have to align with any of them or with the pandemic. The proposal will be judged on its own merit and how it speaks to ‘Boundaries’.

- Boundaries as lines between human landscape and wilderness, and the ensuing crossovers.
- Boundary as policy: Organisms, geopolitical boundaries and travel bubbles, and the historical connections between surveillance, passports, and health.
- Boundaries as caution, from quarantines and isolation protocols, to strings as entry barricades at grocery stores.
- Boundaries of trust between the citizen and the state, from passes for crossing state borders to proofs provided by migrant labour.
- Movement of organisms from the outside and past human body membranes.
- Boundaries and social hierarchies: Organism movements across socio-economic and class structures. Stigma and identity at the edge of science and health.
- Vanishing and surfacing boundaries, from collective scientific efforts to individual adaptations.
- The lines between truth, perception and misinformation.

To reiterate, feel free to explore ‘Boundaries’ as you see fit, and not be bounded by any of our cues!

Scope of project

- Curation of content for the exhibition, including development of the narrative.
- Design and production of the exhibition, including production/construction of exhibition material, installation and promotions.
- Disassembly of the exhibition after the end date for the exhibition (tentatively Jan 31 2022) to restore the gallery to its original condition.

Exhibition location

- On-site: The exhibition must include a physical component that uses the Archives Gallery space. Other optional physical spaces include the Archives Reception Corridor, Archives Basement Lobby and the adjacent Amphitheatre. Please see this link for a plan view of the gallery and other spaces: <http://bit.ly/ArchivesPlanView20180706>.
- Traveling/Remote: Some or all exhibition components should be accessible remotely. This could be a virtual tour and/or a separate exhibition website, which will later be added to the Archives at NCBS website. Or a Mozilla Hubs installation. Or nuggets of the exhibition distributed in other physical locations, all accessible through a common digital portal...

Budget

The winning proposal can be supported up to Rs 5 lakh (Rs 5,00,000). This includes everything – artist fees, costs toward production, travel, installation, publicity, taxes. NCBS will not be covering any costs toward submissions of project proposals for this exhibition.

Target audience

Exhibitions at the Archives at NCBS have diverse audiences. We understand that no single exhibition can work for everyone. At the same time, every exhibition can have elements that speak at different levels. For what it's worth, most visitors tend to be between 20-40 years old. School groups and families with little kids also routinely visit the Archives.

Content/narrative guidelines

- Your proposal for the exhibition should address the theme, Boundaries. It should also show that you have thought about narrative and the intersections of history, design, culture and science.
- The applicant is responsible for gathering content. These can be contemporary or archival records - letters, newspaper clippings, annotated manuscripts, reports, photographs, oral history recordings and video recordings, equipment, specimens, original material created for the exhibition.
- The primary language for exhibition text is English. It should also include some Kannada translations (such as a curatorial note, if any).
- The applicant's proposal should include at least one archival object from the Archives at NCBS full catalogue or selected digital objects. The applicant is expected to find ways to fit the object(s) to their narrative. The aim is to show ways in which one can connect objects from various archives to each other. There is no maximum number of objects that can be used in the narrative and this will have no bearing in the review process. Applicants can use material from a

variety of archives and libraries around the world (through their digital catalogues). For instance, the second exhibition used content from over 10 different sources around the world, including one from the Archives at NCBS.

- The Archives at NCBS can provide original records and/or high resolution digital copies of original records at no cost. It can also help with connecting with archives and libraries to provide high resolution copies of original records. The final responsibility and costs of printing and licensing, if any, is with the applicant.

Editorial

The applicant has control over the editorial choices of their exhibition. The exhibition should be factually accurate and, to the extent possible, opinions should be clearly substantiated in the exhibition. The Archives will facilitate the work and ensure that the applicant's story gets told in a way that honours their art and thought. However, as the publisher for the exhibition, it does reserve rights to all final publishing decisions.

Examples of past exhibitions

- **Backstage of Biology**

Feb 2019 – Jan 2020. Curated by Srajana Kaikini, Naveen Mahantesh and Meera Baindur.

Images: <http://bit.ly/ArchivesGallery1b> and <http://bit.ly/ArchivesGallery1a>

Curator's note: "The Archives at NCBS carry several stories within. Prominent among them is the story of a science institution representing the growth of biology in the history of science in India. Its institutional history is deeply entangled with the people who made it. This exhibition behaves as a logbook of various thought-notes, annotations and perspectives that the archive enables. We bring to the fore an understanding of biology as a collective endeavour, one which illuminates the situatedness, the socio-cultural contingency and the humane face of science, between lab and the field."

- **Herbs, Maps & Medicine: An interpretive exhibition of commerce and spice**

Feb 2020 – Apr 2021. Curated by Anna Spudich. Designed by Abhishek Ray and Matrika Design Collaborative. Written by Gayathri Vaidyanathan.

Images: <http://bit.ly/ArchivesGallery2>

Curator's note: <http://www.ncbs.res.in/events/apls-apls-20200214-spice-trade-matrika>

Provisions and Production Site

Archives at NCBS can provide the following: A digital projector (anchoring location can be changed), a portable tablet for table-mounted digital displays, track lighting in gallery space with provisions for directional lights, ceiling white lights, electrical outlets, WiFi, temperature and humidity control, and up to 500 GB of server space for any digital components. Wall and ceiling colours can be modified by the applicant, as long as the gallery can be brought back to original condition. Main production of exhibition should be off-site and components should have brought in for on-site assembly. The exhibition site should not be used for production work that will generate debris (wood or metal chips, for instance). The only exceptions to this will be direct anchoring to the gallery.

Copyright and ownership

Repositories that loan use of their original material or reproductions of the same shall retain original rights wherever applicable. All elements created specifically for the physical/digital exhibition will be available in the future under a creative commons license, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

Review process

The jury will consist of four individuals: the Archivist at the Archives at NCBS, one senior member of the Archives Review Committee, and two external members with experience in curation and design of physical exhibitions. The jury will review the proposals after Feb 25 2021. Each jury member will evaluate independently. After collating evaluations, a maximum of three applications will be short-listed by Mar 5 2021. This will be relayed to the Purchasing Department to complete the financial formalities. One applicant will be awarded the project by Mar 12 2021.

Submission Guidelines

- The proposal should be in English and address the evaluation criteria listed below.
- Send it before the deadline to archives@ncbs.res.in.
- Do NOT send attachments larger than 2 MB. Our servers will automatically reject large files. Please upload any large files to a cloud-based folder (e.g. Google Drive or Dropbox) from where NCBS can download copies of these files.
- Please do not submit any financial details at this stage. We just need to see the details mentioned below.
- Applicants are welcome to schedule visits to the Archives at NCBS by sending a request to archives@ncbs.res.in. This may help in gauging the available space and surroundings.
- Evaluation criteria:
 - Team and Experience (10 %): Lead and a professional team capable of delivering the project. Where relevant, please provide curriculum vitae. An ideal team is likely to have some combination of curators, space designers, graphic artists, and/or researchers, writers and storytellers.
 - Work Plan (10 %): A project plan with defined timeline and tasks.
 - References (10 %): List of three references (includes at least one from a research institute). Only need contact information and not actual reference letters at this stage.
 - Design Flow and Portfolio (20 %): Share a digital copy of portfolio to show previous work of individuals and/or team. Include details of at least one past project that illustrates the path from conceptual design to being realized for final product. Not all professionals who are part of the proposal team need to be represented in such an example.
 - Proposed Design (40 %): Detailed proposal based on mentioned guidelines. Proposal is evaluated for attention to curation (a clear sense of potential source material), storytelling (a clear sense of a potential narrative) and to design (a clear sense of how the physical and digital spaces will be used).
 - Local Collaboration (10 %): Demonstration that the team can fulfill the requirements of building the exhibition at NCBS in Bangalore.