

Introduction

Since 2020, ISSUE has had a focused response to the crisis of humanity brought about by the global COVID-19 pandemic. A polyptych of four volumes was organised. *Viral Mobilities* (Vol.09, 2020) focused on the Anthropocene as a “virus-vectorised community and economy.” This was followed by two unique volumes dedicated to art and performance. *Tropical Lab* (Vol.10, 2021) studied the impact of the pandemic on artist residencies and mobilities with a close study of *Tropical Lab*—an international art camp. *Arrhythmia* (Special Volume, 2022) looked at the impact and potentiality of isolation and determination, and severe implications for performance-making and embodied communal and social practices.

Vol.11 of ISSUE, themed *Emergency* forms the fourth dimension of the polyptych.

As a contemporary idea, an emergency is primarily borne out by sudden medicalised ruptures to the human body, severe political fractures to the body politic of society, and regular breaks to temporally attend to matters with a sense of immediacy and urgency. These ritualised signifiers form the basis on which one can help ascertain the current station of society. Humanity currently faces a pandemic, eviscerated by an increasingly simultaneous flow of newer emergencies from new and renewed diseases, ritualised lockdowns, political and memory wars, identity and equity battles, food security and supply chain blockages, climate changes, rise in the cost of living, etc.

Etymologically, words such as merge, emerge, emergence, emergency, immerse and submerge draw their primordial reference from classical Latin’s *emergere* (to rise, bring to light). To bring to light (as Zaki Razak’s essay in this volume alludes) is an integral, if not existential, consideration for artistic practices. Through careful enquiries—scanned through past and current environments—art has been a beacon to proffer ways of re-thinking the world. However, with the increasingly shrinking mind-space in an information and social media-led world, artistic considerations are crowded with an urgent need to respond to everyday concerns besides pandemics, new nationalisms or environmental concerns.

This volume is significant in that artists and curators reflect critically to real-time issues. Ksenia Jakobson (Russia) curates Russian and Ukrainian artists in a first-ever book exhibition reflecting on resistance and artist expressions in an ongoing memory war. Chen Yun's (China) lived experience during Shanghai's 2021-2022 infamous lockdowns, form the backdrop of her photo-essay on artist response to the pandemic and its associated crisis management practices. As Amitesh Grover's (India) allegorical essay draws attention to meta-fictional disappearance of images, Mahsa Aleph (Iran) reconstitutes installations on Iranian memory terrain. Zaki Razak (Singapore) and Goran Vojnovic (Slovenia) look inward to speak from a space within—within their unique everyday concerns while dealing with the pandemic. A conversation between three Southeast Asia-based artists provides an insight into the core concerns of being an artist today.

These contributions provide us with a way forward as to how to 'speak' to art and its new emergence.