

## Curatorial Statement

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Moving Reels: Social dialogue between Vietnam and India is an attempt to create trans Asia dialogue through the medium of an artisanal cinema of social critique and experimentation. The process of dialogue is one of building solidarities through the exchange of ideas. Histories of colonial occupation which transformed into the optimism of nation building and subsequently negotiated forces of urbanisation, industrialisation, and globalisation create shared Asian cultural, social and lived contexts in which studying Asia in Asia through regional references becomes increasingly urgent. Cinema provides us the language to perform the evaluation and rethinking of ideas and beliefs, and through which we express and share emotion, experience and knowledge.

Cinema prompts us to consider how visual representation can prompt diverse subjectivities, imaginations and relationships between citizens and society. My focus for this programme is on the nearly five-decade strong independent documentary cinema in India, a vibrant cultural form whose roots lie equally in resistance as in artistic expression. Its beginning in the mid 1970s marks a historic moment when ordinary citizens picked up a camera and in the spirit of modern citizenship, recorded images and voices that lay beyond the bounds of officially sanctioned representation. The reverberation of this moment is equal to if not greater than the represented content of these early films. It set the foundations for a thriving documentary film movement whose functionaries include a cross section of society; activists, feminists, artists, students, social workers, teachers, journalists, to whom cinema offers both expression and voice. With little more than access to a video camera and a desire to speak, a generation of filmmakers documented stories of urban and rural oppression, women's struggles, caste discrimination, migration, urban development, land rights, and personal struggles and lives. Beyond the confines of cinema theatres, as these filmmakers travelled the country with their films they also built audiences and created new spaces and circuits of visibility.

When discussing documentary cinema, we must consider its material qualities and the ways it conceptualises an alternate relation between art, persons and the social world. How we understand its expressive and persuasive properties defines our relationship to and understanding of the form. While the narratives challenge documentary "authenticity", they pose questions about representation and power. Critical standpoints re-examine historical narratives and representations even as filmmakers' experiment with techniques, materials and technologies. The visual and sonic choices and arrangements invite us to consider each filmmaker's relationship with not only people and issues but with space, time and cinema itself. This programme features films about urban development, modernity and gender struggles and encourages new possibilities to review our relation to cinema as we deeply examine our responses of critique, pleasure, reflection and contemplation.