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Dear Friend,

People frequently ask me what “Tasveer” means.

When I explain that it translates to “picture” in both Hindi and Urdu, they nod in understanding. Known as we are for our annual South Asian film festival (largest in the country!) and our focus on using the arts to advance social justice, that name makes a lot of sense.

Lately, as I’ve been reflecting on two decades I have served this incredible organization, it occurs to me that while “picture” is apt, Tasveer means so much more--to me, and to you, the community with and for whom we work.

In 2021 your support allowed us to experiment with the Tasveer Festival, a month-long extravaganza of film and literary offerings, during which filmmakers, authors, scholars, and activists shared their art and created conversations--with you--that tried to understand the current moment while also placing it into a larger historical context. From our vaccine information program with the state of Washington to a newly expanded Tasveer Film Fund and the Desi Girl Comedy Project, we used our platform to elevate our voices, while keeping our community healthy and connected.

So, what does Tasveer mean? For me, it means all the things I love--film and art used in the service of improving the world; and it means YOU--a community of caring, generous people who recognize the value of this work and choose to contribute your time and resources to keep it strong.

YOU mean the world to Tasveer!

Rita Meher
CO-FOUNDER/EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
2021 IN REVIEW

PROGRAMS

Tasveer Festival
Tasveer Film Fund
Community Speaks

Tasveer Author Events
Pride Month
Dept of Health Partnership
Tasveer Festival - **Watch | Read | Talk** combined three major events: 16th Tasveer South Asian Film Festival (TSAFF), 3rd Tasveer South Asian LitFest (TSAL), and an all-women new standup talk - Desi Girls Comedy Project.

The festival took place over **24** days with **88** films, **37** authors, **47** live events, **28** filmmaker guests, and **6** comedians. Nearly **10,000** viewers tuned in from **125** cities, **53** states/provinces, and **18** countries. Viewers watched **41,500** minutes of film on our virtual platform TasveerTV.

“I was immediately drawn to Tasveer’s mission of amplifying underrepresented South Asian voices in literature and film. As an author who has struggled to find representation in a whitewashed industry where even voices of color are interpreted through a white lens - I believe Tasveer’s work is meaningful & important”

- Veena Rao, award winning journalist & author.
In its 16th year, Tasveer South Asian Film Festival wowed viewers with 88 films from 11 countries, with nine world premieres and 22 U.S. premieres. Selected films ranged from short films to features, and included documentaries, music videos, and even an interactive filmscape.

**TSAFF Special Guests included**
- Karan Soni (Deadpool), Roshan Sethi (The Resident), Sahraa Karimi (dir. Hava Maryam Ayesha, Afghanistan’s official entry to the 92nd Academy Awards), Shiwani Srivastava (Wedding Season, in production with Netflix)

**Filling Gaps in the Film Industry**
In 2021 Tasveer South Asian Film Festival far outpaced the popular film industry in highlighting underrepresented groups:
- **100%** of TSAFF films featured South Asian characters, compared to only 7% of popular films including any Asian speaking characters
- **52%** of TSAFF films had a woman of color as the lead character (only 17% of popular films featured a woman of color in the lead)
- **43%** of TSAFF directors were women, compared to 10% of popular films directed by women
16th Annual

TASVEER SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL
The third iteration of Tasveer South Asian LitFest brought 37 authors to 10 live panel events focused around queer narratives, historical fiction, poetry, feminist and women-centered literature, the publishing industry, young adult fiction, and much more.

TSAL special guests included:
- Mira Sethi (Are You Enjoying)
- Avni Doshi (Burnt Sugar)
- Alka Joshi (The Secret Keeper of Jaipur, film adaptation now in production with Netflix)

“Erasure of Stories is Violence.”
Hussain Haidry, author
Tasveer presented Desi Girls Comedy Project, the first-ever South Asian women’s comedy of its kind, with funding from the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods. This four-week comedy workshop, led by New York-based comedian Zubi Ahmed, was offered free of charge to South Asian womxn and non-binary participants seeking to express themselves through comedy.

The majority of participants were from the Seattle area, with budding comedians also joining in virtually from Washington DC, Texas, New York, Canada, Pakistan, and Norway.

The project culminated in a side-splitting performance from local participants at our Tasveer Festival Closing Night, including guest appearances from:

- Zubi Ahmed, host of Kutti Gang (a New York Times and Time Out New York recommended comedy show that features women, queer, and non-binary South Asian performers)
- Aizzah Fatima, actor (Americanish, High Maintenance, The Good Wife) and writer/actor for one-woman play (Dirty Paki Lingerie)
- Sonal Aggarwal, comedian, and actor (The Alchemy of Bliss, Easy, A Period Piece)
In 2021, with support from Netflix, Tasveer expanded the program to support three filmmakers who are developing short film, documentary and LGBTQIA+ film projects.

- **62** scripts were submitted, our highest engagement yet
- **9** finalists pitched their scripts to a panel of industry professionals
- **3** amazing scripts were funded

- **Documentary**: “Citizen Khan” by Khaula Malik & Sana A. Malik - A daughter finds herself caught between fear of betraying her father’s 100-year-old local business and her uncertain future as she prepares to sell the motel she’s been running.
- **LGBTQ+**: “Zindagi Dobara (Life Again)” by Amritpal Kaur - A film centering a young South Asian teen who, after her parents' sudden death, is forced to live with a distant grandmother she's never met before.
- **Short Narrative**: “Let’s Talk About It” by Mukesh Kumar - A young Indian-American woman has it all: a good job, a loving husband, and a nice house. But the unexpressed pressure and stigma of being in an inter-faith marriage and living in an alien society take a fatal toll on her life.
South Asian community members shared their stories of personal empowerment, spiritual reckoning, family acceptance, and more under the theme “Silencing the Taboo”. The 2021 iteration of Community Speaks, which began in 2008 as a co-presentation with API Chaya, sought to dismantle the power of the taboo that silences us.

8 brave storytellers participated in free workshops to write, hone, and present their personal stories of resilience

3 virtual presentations

“The driving factor of sharing my story was that the pain of keeping it inside was greater than the pain and fear of other people finding out. I also believe that there is power in words, and the feelings and emotions that once made me feel so powerless needed a way out. The entire process of writing and sharing my story was incredibly exhilarating because the group of South Asian people I was with were so accepting...”

- Adithya, Community Speaks participant
Throughout the year Tasveer partnered with Elliott Bay Book Company to host Q&A’s and readings with excellent and compelling South Asian authors such as:

- REVEALING THE UNTOLD WITH BROWN GIRL MAGAZINE - AUTHOR MEETS WITH SONORA JHA -

PRIDE MONTH

Tasveer co-founder Farah Nousheen and filmmaker Sonali Gulati presented weekly arts and culture programs throughout June, to celebrate South Asian queer stories, build solidarity, and educate viewers including:

- “I AM” FILM SCREENING + SONALI GULATI Q&A
- “I AM BONNIE” FILM SCREENING + DIRECTOR AND ACTOR Q&A
- SOUTH ASIAN SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE STUDY GROUP
- INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE WITH QUEER SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN
PARTNERING WITH THE WA STATE DEPT OF HEALTH

The WA State DOH partnered with Tasveer as we disseminated information about the COVID-19 vaccine in seven South Asian languages, encouraging viewers to take the vaccine, practice social distancing, and work together to end the pandemic. This partnership will continue in 2022, and we encourage folks to visit tasveer.org/covid-19 for information and resources.

For your safety, and the safety of those around you, please...

GET VACCINATED.

WEAR A MASK.

GET TESTED.
Financial Highlights

2021 INCOME

- Government Grants: $179,000
- Foundation Grants: $47,500
- Individual Giving: $92,810
- Corporate Matching: $21,730
- Sponsorship: $77,000
- Membership: $1,475
- Ticket & Pass Sales: $8,300
- Other Earned Income: $35,390

Total Income: $463,205

2021 EXPENSE

- Artistic Salaries: $100,497
- Production/Exhibition/Service Expense: $109,548
- Administrative Expense: $141,599

Total Expense: $351,644
IN THE PRESS

TASVEER FILM FUND

AP News: Tasveer Film Fund Triples Filmmaker Funding in the Second Year
Yahoo Finance: Tasveer Film Fund Triples Filmmaker Funding
Benzinga: Tasveer Film Fund Triples in Second Year

TASVEER FESTIVAL

FilmFestival.com: Tasveer Festival In-Person and Virtual Events going hybrid this fall
Crosscut: Fall Arts | 35 art shows and festivals to see in Seattle
Seattle Patch: Tasveer Festival Showcases the best in South Asian arts
What's Up NW: Upcoming Event: 16th Annual Tasveer Festival
Seattle Times: Love movies? Check out these Seattle-area film festivals in fall 2021
Seattle PI: Seattle's South Asian arts festival celebrates community through food
Goltune: Watch | Read | Talk : Theme of This Year’s Tasveer Festival
Tasveer is proud to be one of five arts and culture nonprofits highlighted during ArtsFund’s COVID Cultural Impact Study. This study revealed just how important arts and culture institutions have been throughout the pandemic in Washington State, as well as the devastating financial impacts that are felt most strongly by small and BIPOC-led nonprofits.

“Upon the arrival of COVID in Washington State in March 2020, arts and cultural venues were among the first to close, and in many cases, remain among the last to re-open. Despite this, the industry has been actively supporting our communities by offering healthy outlets to process the trauma, isolation, and loss that so many of us experienced throughout the crisis. While the cultural sector has shown resilience, innovation, and dedication in finding new ways to serve communities across the state, and while the investment of public, private, and individual supporters has kept the sector from collapse during closure, the future is still uncertain. We are in a moment of crisis. At the same time, we are in a moment of opportunity. The cultural sector will play a critical role in community recovery (economic and social), and there is a role for all of us to play in supporting the sector.”
- Michael Greer, ArtsFund President & CEO

We did - whether we wanted to or not - become a national organization.

Rita Meher, Executive Director of Tasveer, a quote from the study.

Read the full report here
COVID CULTURAL IMPACT STUDY

"The shift forced by the pandemic allowed Tasveer to prove that there is a deep market for the content that they produce, but now they haven't the resources and capacity to tap into the opportunity in front of them. They are working on a path forward. It was clear that offering programming for free was not sustainable for the organization, and more importantly, free content devalues art and the contributions of the filmmakers.

The most recent festival in October 2021 used a paywall and geo-blocking to protect artists and still reached 10,000 viewers. Netflix has supported a new fund housed at Tasveer to empower South Asian filmmakers with $5,000 grants and year-long resources and mentorship access. Despite the success on the national scale and intention to continue with virtual offerings, Tasveer’s roots are local, and they also long for the old days of connecting with their loyal film buffs in Northwest theaters. The digital pivot has been a struggle for older audience members who have been Tasveer cultural participants for 15+ years. Spaces that were willing to host the festival were scarce this past fall as the pandemic dragged on, and available spaces were in high demand. For a festival dependent on renting venues, space has been a constant challenge over its entire existence, and one that has only grown greater with COVID restrictions.

Tasveer's experience has shown just how meaningless our geographical boundaries can be when it comes to storytelling. Messages transcend borders with ease. In this context, the structure of our traditional means of funding arts and culture, can evolve with the changing ways arts and culture are being delivered. For example, Tasveer is delighting and enriching audiences in California, but not eligible for arts funding from California jurisdictions. Within Washington, the pattern of cities and counties with and without dedicated arts funding have created an uneven landscape of arts and cultural organizations. For Tasveer, an equitable and resilient future for arts and culture in Washington means recognizing that arts anywhere provides benefits everywhere".
Thank you to our supporters

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