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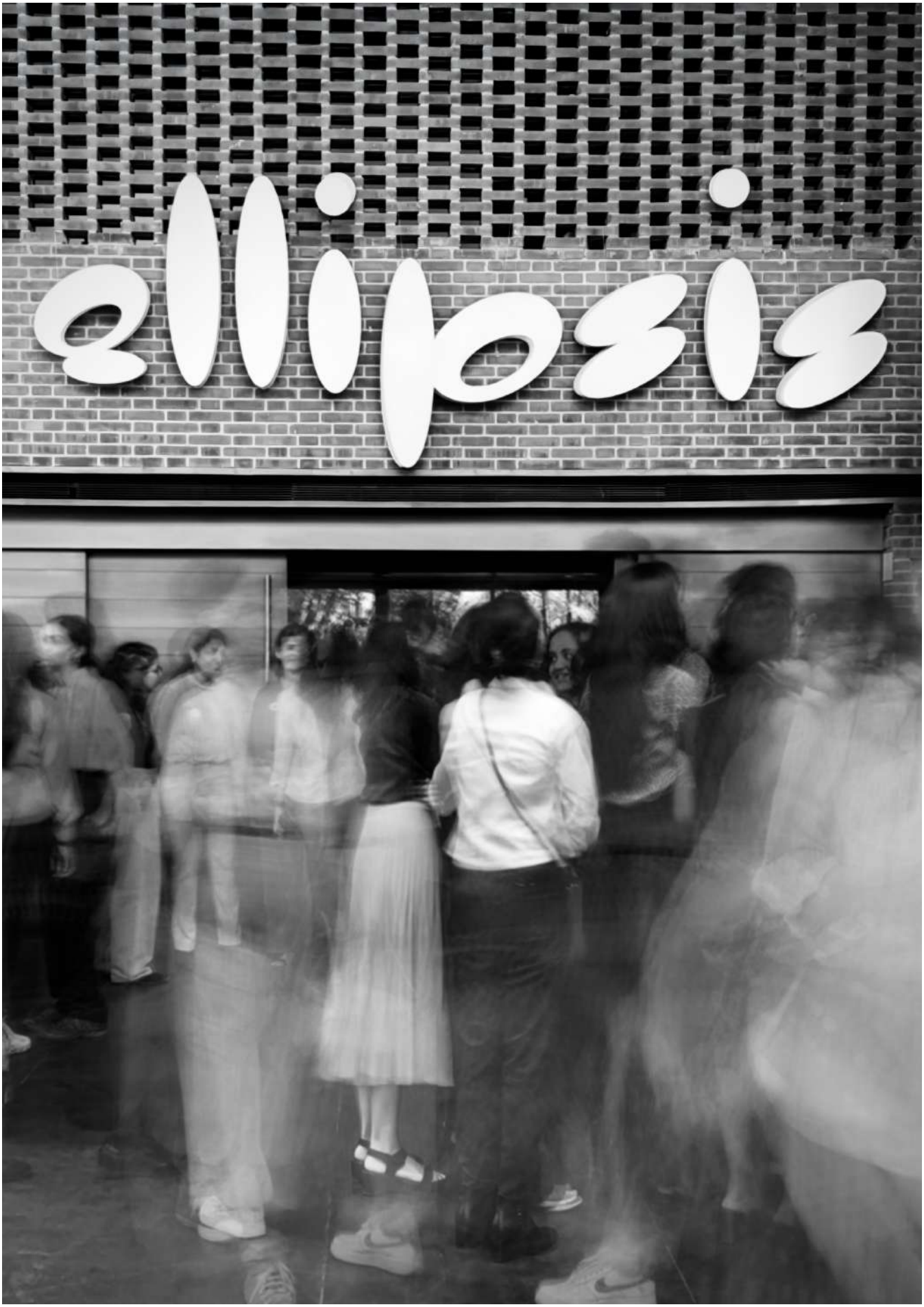
SDI School of Design & Innovation



BANGALORE
INTERNATIONAL
CENTRE

Design, photography, and words by
Srinath G M

A subtle shift was in the air long before the exhibition doors opened. Students weren't merely arranging their projects—they were shaping spaces for ideas, for tension, for dialogue. The Bangalore International Centre, with its quiet modernity, began to absorb these subtle gestures: sketches affixed to glass, projections spilling onto raw concrete, handwritten provocations pinned to minimalist walls. This was no ordinary exhibition. It became a dynamic exchange. The Bangalore International Centre, with its calm modernity, began to absorb these gestures: sketches taped to glass, projections spilling onto concrete, handwritten provocations pinned to clean walls. This was more than an exhibition. It was a living exchange.

Across three days, what unfolded was a field of questions. About the ethics of artificial intelligence, about authorship in the age of automation, about the erasure and reassertion of culture through design. Some students debated these ideas in panels and open conversations. Others responded quietly, through form, texture, or typographic tension. The result was not consensus—but a map of where young design minds are beginning to wander, push, and resist.

This reflection is not a catalogue of events. It doesn't attempt to account for everything that happened. Instead, it returns to the mood and the intent that shaped the experience. Written in a more editorial tone, it traces how students approached complexity—not with fixed answers, but with a willingness to stay with difficult questions.

It also records something quieter but essential: the shift from design as outcome to design as thought. For a few days, the exhibition held that possibility—to think in public, to unlearn in company, and to imagine futures that remain responsibly unfinished.

Designing in the Open, Thinking in Public

“It didn’t feel like a setup. It felt like an argument in progress—about what design should be.”

Bending Time at BIC

A personal account of a design school moment that questioned what the future could (and should) look like.

There's something about the day before an exhibition opens. It's not chaos exactly. It's a quiet intensity, like watching a city being built overnight. And that's exactly what it felt like at the Bangalore International Centre—a place that's equal parts gallery, agora, and gentle enabler of ideas.

On that day before, the students weren't just setting up; they were negotiating identity. Every panel raised, every thread pinned to a board, every graphic tucked into a corner—each was an act of personal authorship. But not in isolation. What was extraordinary was how individual ideas were not competing, but converging. What emerged was not uniformity but a shared urgency. It was a school speaking—not in unison, but in harmony.

At one end, a group adjusted projection timings. At another, someone sat cross-legged, cutting vinyl letters. The air was thick with purpose. Even silence had a certain hum to it. You could tell the work was not just about craft, but about point of view. About how to make space for yourself in a world that often doesn't wait for your opinion.

And BIC—the venue—didn't impose. It received. It reflected. Like it had always been waiting for students to come and shake its walls a bit.

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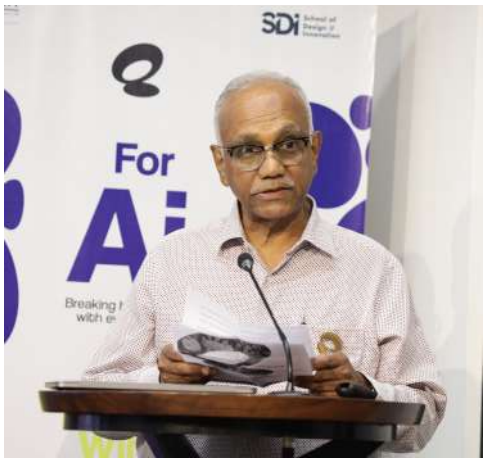
Opening Notes: With Mantras and Meta

Source: Ellipsis Media Archive

We began where many things in India begin—with a Ganapati mantra. That anchoring hum reminded everyone that we still believe in beginnings, and in doing them right. In her opening talk, **Prof. (Dr.) Anuradha Chatterjee** expressed her gratitude to all the guests on the dais for their presence. The air was thick with anticipation as she released the exhibition catalog in the presence of the esteemed invitees. She warmly acknowledged the faculty and student convenors—not as a formality, but with genuine gratitude and camaraderie.

From left to right – Student Exhibition Convenors; **Prof. Rajavel Manoharan**, Associate Dean, SoDI; **Mr. Syed Shahameer**, Registrar, RV Educational Institutions; **Mr. Nikhil Murthy**, Asst. Secretary, RSST; **Prof. (Dr.) Dwarika Prasad Uniyal**, Vice Chancellor, RV University; **Dr. Shridhar Marri**, CEO and Founder, Flyfish.ai; **Dr. A.V.S. Murthy**, Chancellor, RV University; **Prof. (Dr.) Anuradha Chatterjee**, Pro Vice Chancellor and Dean, SoDI; and Faculty Exhibition Convenors **Prof. Khushboo Doshi**, **Prof. Sanjeetha M.**, and **Prof. Vivek Kishore Thashnath**



Source: Ellipsis Media Archive

Dr. AVS Murthy, Chancellor of RV University, opened with a compelling provocation: *Can culture and technology co-exist without dilution?* His answer was firm—*not only can they, they must*. In a world rushing toward technological acceleration, he urged for a return to cultural grounding. Design, he insisted, needs both innovation and inheritance.

Mr. Nikhil Murthy, Assistant Secretary of RSST, built on that thought with a clear reminder: *Use AI—but do so ethically*. Preserve originality. Use it not to bypass creativity, but to amplify it. His vision of AI in design education emphasised ethics, intentionality, and deeper thinking.

Source: Ellipsis Media Archive

Then came **Prof. (Dr.) Dwarika Prasad Uniyal**, Vice Chancellor of RV University. And with him, the shift was palpable. "Machines may dream, but we must do the waking."

He didn't offer warnings or promises—he offered a compass. He spoke of human intersection over AI, of dichotomy and evolution, of the spectrum of possibilities. His message was radical in its simplicity: even as machines evolve toward a near-sentient dream state, it is human experience, touch, and decision-making that must remain central.

The room felt it. Students sat up straighter. Pens paused mid-sentence. He wasn't romanticising the past—he was challenging the future to stay human.

Mr. Syed Shahameer, Registrar at RSST, reflects on the evolving role of AI in education, urging educators to go beyond mere integration and focus on engagement. "It's not just about using AI tools," he notes, "but about rethinking how we teach with them." He calls for creative, student-centric approaches that make learning more interactive and meaningful.

Source: Ellipsis Media Archive

Looking to 2040: Dr. Shridhar Marri's Keynote

Dr. Shridhar Marri, CEO and Founder of Flyfish.ai, spoke with quiet fire. He asked the room to time-travel—not with fiction, but with intent.

"Don't be the prisoner of the past," he said. "Look to the future as if you could bend time."

He painted a picture of Year 2040, a world shaped by:

- Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)
- Quantum Internet & Computing at Scale
- Brain-Computer Interfaces that immerse fully
- Neuroprosthetics with sensory feedback
- Shape-shifting materials that respond to context
- Predictive healthcare, hyper-personalised
- Autonomous transportation systems across land, air, and sea

But even as the screen filled with these futuristic possibilities, his voice anchored us to the present: We shape these technologies—not the other way around.

Dr. Shridhar Marri,
CEO and Founder of Flyfish.ai

Source: Ellipsis Media Archive

Closing Words: Gratitude and Hope

Prof. (Dr.) Anuradha Chatterjee, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the School of Design and Innovation closed the morning session with grace and offered a preview of the sessions to come. She thanked everyone for being present—not just in body, but in spirit. With visible pride, she applauded the students and faculty for curating a fascinating, forward-thinking exhibition—one that didn't just ask what the future of design looks like, but who gets to design that future.

For Ai
Breaking boundaries with every byte.
ellipsis
With Ai
Collaborating with intelligence, anchored in values.
ellipsis
Against Ai
Because we feel, not compute.
ellipsis

Tracing My Story
A DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION
Graphic Designer | Illustrator | Visual Storyteller
MERLIN
PORTFOLIO LINK | 9744291710
Concept Art
Storyboarding
Branding
Book Cover Design
Infographics
Flow Beyond Numbers
Gargi Mathur

AI in Healthcare
ai chatbots in mental health
SUPPORT
OR
ADDICTION?
JEEWANU

Route to Reach
UPI
Timely
A HEART IS A HEAVY BURDEN

Design, Doodles & a Dramatic Fish
My Chaotic Journey
Vaibhavi
Curiosity
Type Design
Illustration
Publication Design
Photography
Creativity
Versatility
REC
WHITE SPACE
HELP
Hi!
Scan for portfolio!
SocialShop
Social Shop
CoverWise
Problem Statement
Features

LEXIPEN
Co-Navigating IKEA
Lingo Tag
LINGO TAG
Roots to Reach
From Start to Beyond
RV UNIVERSITY
SDI School of Design & Innovation

The Other Side
When the world turns.
Theme- Against AI
character design
Gaethika Rao
Communication Designer

JEEWANU

Then the Word AI Took Over the Room

Source: Ellipsis Media Archive

The Expert Talk that afternoon centered around the fast-evolving intersection of fashion, the metaverse, and AI-powered virtual influencers. **Prof. Deep Sagar Verma**, a self-described futurist and tech visionary, unpacked the growing relevance of avatar generation and how the 'meta' world is steadily becoming the next career frontier. From digital identity to AI-assisted creativity, he outlined how students can ride this wave through coding, innovation, and cross-disciplinary learning. Various AI tools were introduced not as novelties but as essential extensions of human imagination and industry. By the end of the hour, one thing was clear—AI had not just entered the room; it had claimed the future.

Source: Ellipsis Media Archive

Following this, the workshop titled "Generative UI – Integrate Conversations in APPS" focused on the future of user interfaces, emphasising fluidity over mere functionality. Led by **Mr. Parikshit Deshmukh**, Founder of Thsys.ai and former Design Head at DevRev & Recko, the session explored how generative UI can transform application designs by making them more interactive and adaptable. Mr. Deshmukh shared valuable advice, including the importance of prioritising user empathy by designing interfaces that not only respond to user actions but also anticipate their needs, creating a seamless and intuitive experience. He also emphasised the need to embrace iterative design, where continuous testing and refinement are essential to staying ahead in the fast-evolving tech landscape. Lastly, he encouraged integrating AI thoughtfully—ensuring that AI enhances user experience without overwhelming the interface, making applications smarter and more responsive.

Prof. ALEKSANDRA ROTAR

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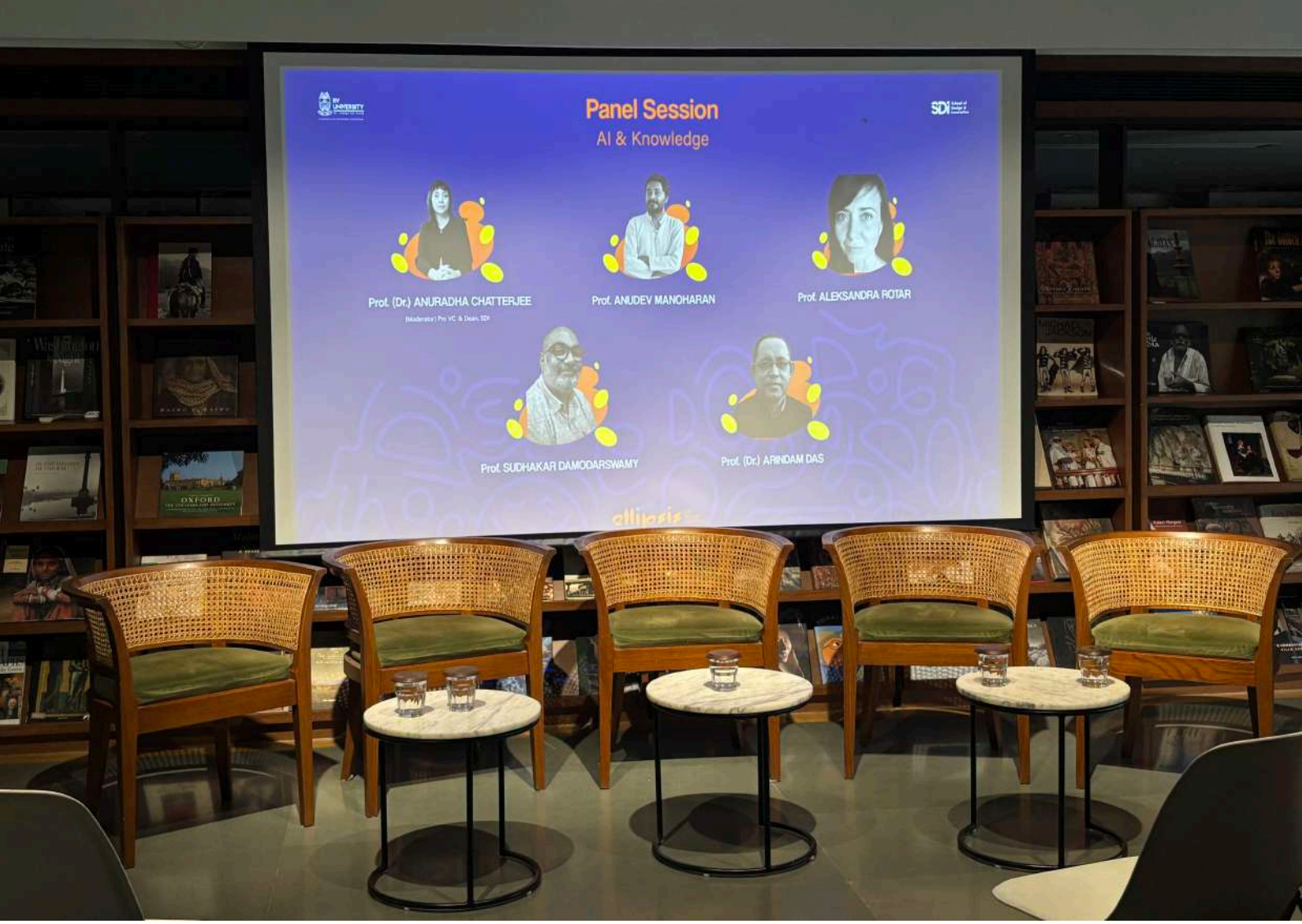


Reframing Intelligence: Panel Unpacks AI's Role in Shaping Knowledge

In an invigorating panel discussion titled "AI & Knowledge," moderated by the incisive **Prof. (Dr.) Anuradha Chatterjee**, the conversation moved beyond hype and fear, venturing into the rich, often contradictory territory where artificial intelligence intersects with human cognition, creativity, and embodied ways of knowing.

Framed through a design-led lens, the session explored how knowledge is produced, felt, and mediated in an era increasingly shaped by machine logic. The tone was not speculative, but grounded—curious yet critical.

"AI must provoke, not just perform," asserted **Prof. Anudev Manoharan**, who positioned artificial intelligence as a generative collaborator, capable of unsettling habits of thought and expanding creative possibilities. Rather than treating AI as a mere tool for automation, Manoharan invited the audience to consider it a partner that reconfigures our cognitive boundaries.

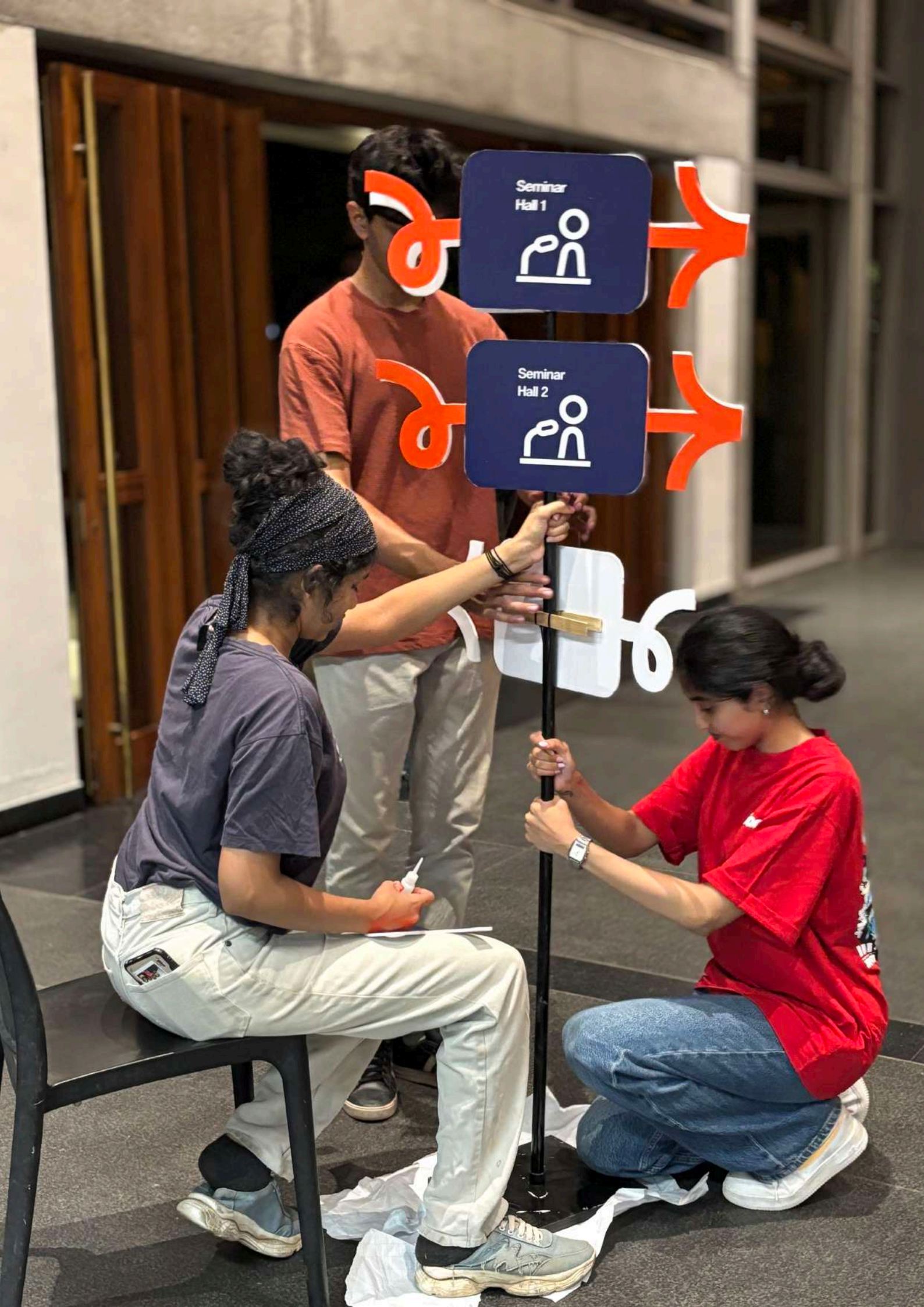
Prof. Aleksandra Rotar turned the conversation toward the materiality of experience, cautioning against the flattening effects of AI mediation. "We must preserve the integrity of spatial and tactile encounters," she insisted, calling attention to what risks being lost when digital abstraction overshadows lived, sensory-rich knowledge.

Bridging tradition and tech, **Prof. Sudhakar Damodarswamy** spoke to the potential of hybrid practices. "Code and hand can coexist," he noted, advocating for a synthesis between tactile making and algorithmic logic—a coexistence that doesn't erase the past, but reimagines it.

Rounding out the panel, **Prof. (Dr.) Arindam Das** offered a philosophical provocation: "What counts as knowledge when machines think?" He proposed that AI demands a redefinition of epistemology itself, one that embraces the 'machine' not as alien, but as integral to the future architecture of thought.

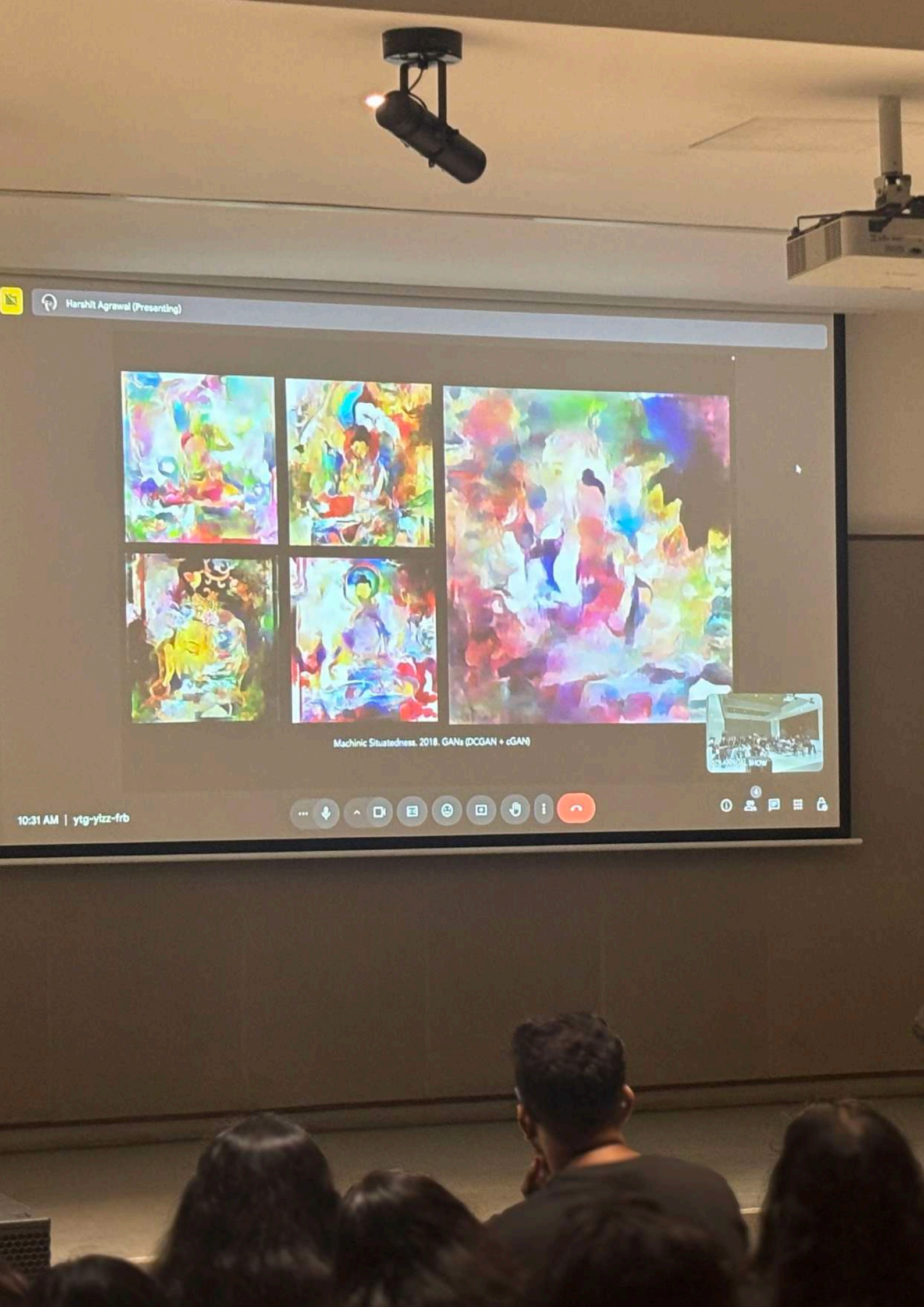
Throughout the discussion, one idea resonated: AI doesn't replace human creativity—it refracts it. By unsettling binaries of hand vs. code, craft vs. algorithm, intuition vs. logic, the panel called for a more integrated, ethical, and imaginative reckoning with AI—one that invites collaboration, not competition.

EXHIBITS
ELEVATOR
RECEPTION


Seminar
Hall 1
Seminar
Hall 2

BEATLES

ellipsis
RAISE3D
Pro3


Harshit Agrawal (Presenting)
Machinic Situatedness. 2018. GANs (DCGAN + cGAN)
10:31 AM | ytg-ylzz-frb

Exploring the Poetics of Technology with Harshit Agarwal

On Day 2, the stage was set for a compelling expert talk that merged technology, aesthetics, and cultural critique. Titled "Exploring the Poetics of Technology," the session featured **Mr. Harshit Agarwal** – AI artist, MIT alum, and the first Indian to hold a solo exhibition of AI-generated art.

In a darkened seminar hall lit by the glow of digital projections, Agarwal joined virtually to unpack how algorithms are not just tools, but active participants in the creation of contemporary art. Drawing from his own practice, he guided the audience through the ways AI mediates creativity—where code becomes canvas, and filters become aesthetic arguments.

What stood out was his sharp interrogation of the overwhelmingly Eurocentric training datasets used in AI art. He emphasised the absence of Eastern artistic traditions in these generative systems, raising urgent questions around representation, authorship, and cultural dominance in machine learning.

"Whose aesthetics does AI inherit?" he asked, pushing students to critically engage with the seemingly neutral algorithms that increasingly shape our visual world.

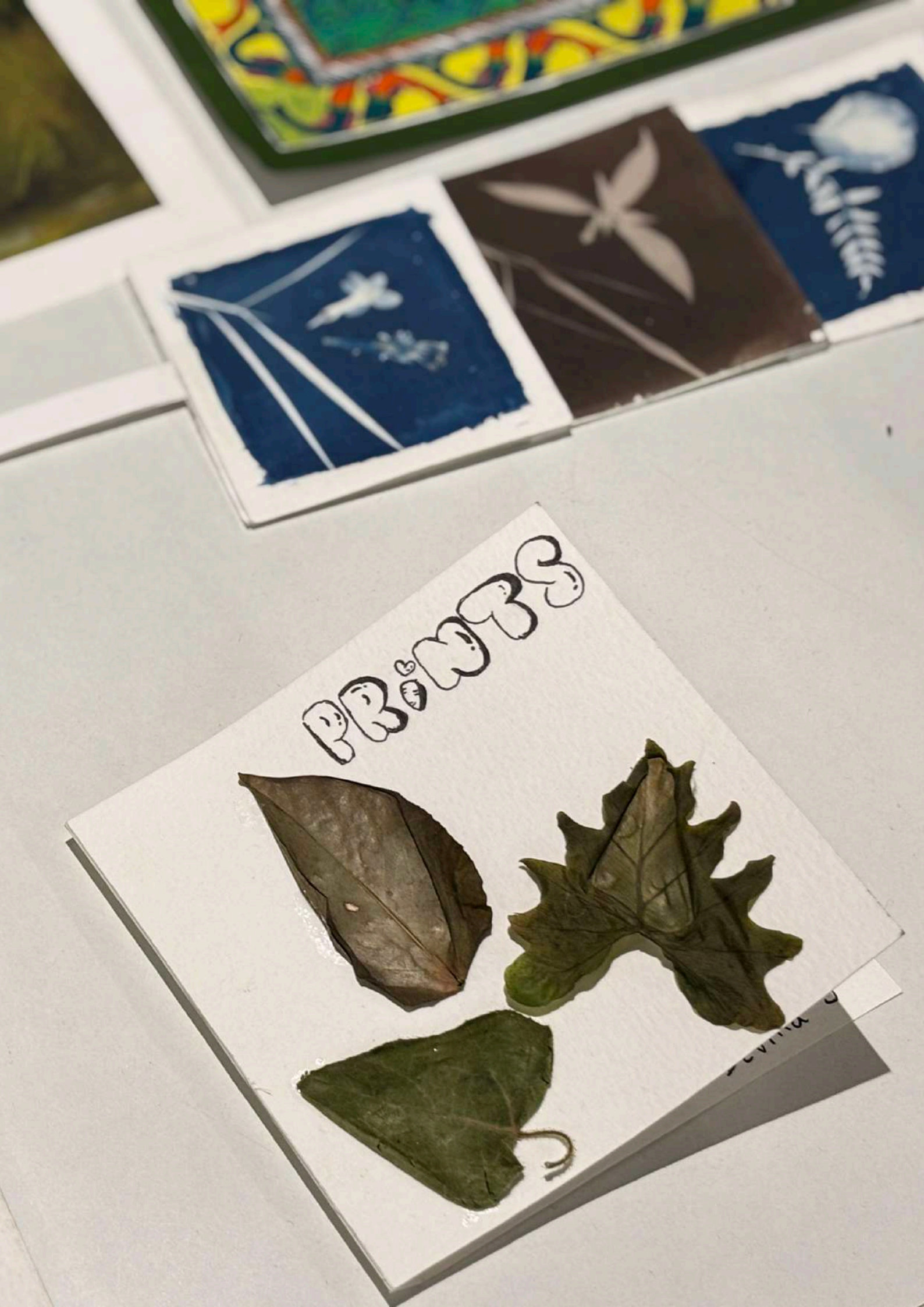
The session also touched on:

- The role of AI in redefining authorship and collaboration in art-making.
- How filters, beauty standards, and digital norms are encoded through algorithmic decisions.
- The possibility of AI generating not just images, but poetry and emotional resonance.

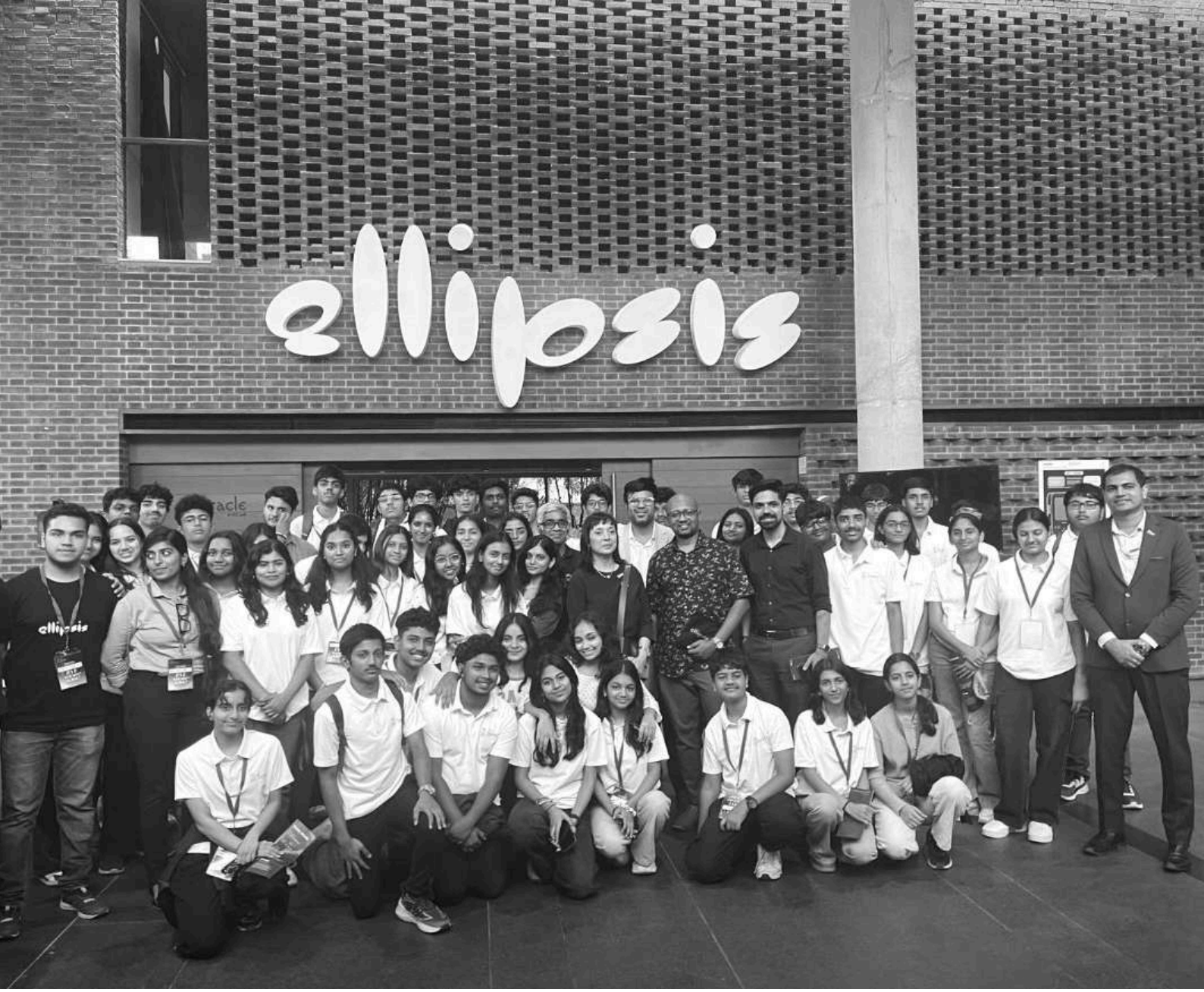
Through real-time visuals of his generative works—fluid, abstract, and deeply human in their suggestion—Agarwal challenged the audience to see AI not as a replacement, but as a mirror: one that reflects not just our data, but our desires, omissions, and politics.
This wasn't just a lecture. It was an invitation to think differently about art, technology, and the poetics that bind them.

Kriyashala

artefacts step into the spotlight


PRINTS

The Evolution of Beekeeping:
Tradition Meets Innovation Near Bengaluru
Chinmay Adity Sharma
Product Design
Study on
TEMPORARY STRUCTURES
MYSORE
ROYAL CITY



Source: Ellipsis Media Archive

In a vibrant convergence of design, inspiration, and youthful curiosity, RV University's Summer School students visited *Ellipsis*—the annual design showcase by the School of Design & Innovation, RV University. Students explored a wide spectrum of work—from innovative fashion and functional product design to socially rooted communication projects and reimagined spatial experiences. Each exhibit reflected the power of human-centered thinking and visual storytelling, sparking fresh perspectives among the visiting students. Curated under the visionary leadership of Dr. Anuradha Chatterjee, Dean and Pro Vice Chancellor of RV University, the event offered more than inspiration—it invited participation, conversation, and critical reflection. For many Summer School students, this marked their first real encounter with the transformative potential of design, and they left not only informed, but visibly energised, carrying with them ideas that could shape the way they see and engage with the world.

An immersive artwork installation by the Environmental Graphics students from Communication Design, created under the mentorship of **Prof. Rohith Krishnan**.

The AI Crossroads – Learning or Misuse?

Student-Led Debate: Designing Perspectives – A Debate on AI, Design and Futures

The most anticipated moment of Ellipsis—a debate so compelling, it brought the entire event to a contemplative standstill. Students, faculty, visiting guests, and curious outsiders filled a cozy, book-lined venue that felt more like a thinking chamber than a classroom. Conversations rippled through the crowd even before the event began—a sure sign that "Designing Perspectives: A Debate on AI, Design and Futures" had touched a nerve. The question at the heart of this student-led event was both timely and thorny: Is AI a genuine aid to learning—or a growing shortcut that undermines it?

Moderated with nuance and anchored in student research, the debate featured two spirited teams, each articulating clear, and at times provocative, perspectives. This wasn't a debate about whether AI was good or bad; it was about its place, its boundaries, and how it is redefining the very act of learning.

Pro-AI: Advocating for Assistance, Not Abdication

Opening the discussion, **Shreya Srinivas** from the Pro-AI team struck a measured yet optimistic note. "We're not here to celebrate laziness," she began. "We're here to recognise that learning today also means learning with machines." Her argument emphasised AI as a research and writing partner—one that helps students navigate information overload, organise ideas, and articulate thoughts with greater clarity. She likened AI to a calculator in mathematics: not a replacement for logic, but a tool for acceleration.

Aditya Ballolli expanded on this, positioning AI as a democratising force. "For a student struggling with language, or someone juggling multiple responsibilities, AI can level the playing field," he said. "It can assist, simplify, and offer scaffolding—especially in design fields where ideation, not just articulation, matters." For Aditya, the future of education lies in recognising learning diversity, and AI, when used responsibly, offers a bridge—not a crutch.

Nidhi Ballall, completing the Pro-AI triad, drew on real-life examples of students using ChatGPT not to replace thinking, but to spark it. "Students aren't asking AI for answers—they're asking for ways to frame better questions," she observed. "We're in a new age of inquiry, and AI can push the boundaries of exploration if we allow it."

From left to right – Shreya Srinivas, Nidhi Ballall and Aditya Ballolli

Against-AI: Warning Bells and Critical Reflections

The Against-AI team was equally compelling, anchoring their case in academic integrity and the foundational values of education. **Monisha S Honnagiri** didn't mince words. "AI makes it dangerously easy to outsource not just writing, but thinking," she said. "And when we stop thinking deeply, we lose the essence of education." Her concern wasn't about technology per se—it was about a creeping culture of convenience that could flatten complexity.

Prisha Jagdish questioned whether grades earned with AI truly reflect learning. "If originality becomes optional, and critical engagement is side-stepped, what are we really assessing?" she asked. "Design isn't just about outcomes—it's about process, struggle, failure, and reflection. AI often skips that middle ground." Her point resonated deeply in a design school context, where making and meaning are often inseparable.

The closing remarks by **Anna Lucine Elisha** brought the audience to a moment of collective pause. "AI shouldn't think for us—it should push us to think better," she said. "When it becomes invisible, when we don't know where our thoughts end and the machine's begin, we risk intellectual amnesia." Her argument was not anti-technology, but pro-consciousness. She called for a more intentional, more dialogic engagement with AI—one that strengthens, rather than replaces, cognitive effort.

From left to right – Anna Lucine Elisha, Prisha Jagdish and Monisha S Honnagiri

Faculty Perspectives: A Changing Pedagogical Landscape

What made the event richer was the active participation of faculty members who joined the discussion after the student debate. One professor noted, "We are witnessing a fundamental shift in what it means to read, write, and evaluate." Another added, "AI challenges our rubrics—how do we assess authorship, voice, and originality in a time of co-authored cognition?" These reflections underscored the point that educators, like students, are navigating a new frontier—one that demands both technological literacy and ethical clarity.

The Thin Line: Empowerment vs. Erosion
What emerged from this debate was not a binary answer, but a layered understanding. The real question is not whether students should use AI—but how, when, and why they do. When used transparently and reflectively, AI can sharpen thought, accelerate discovery, and empower learning. When used to bypass effort, it can dilute the very skills education seeks to build.

The AI crossroads, it turns out, isn't about machines—it's about choices.
As the audience dispersed, conversations spilled into the hallways. Some students talked about using AI more responsibly, others debated where to draw the ethical line. One thing was clear: the debate had done what good education always does—it left people thinking, questioning, and reimagining the future.

Source: Ellipsis Media Archive

Prof. (Dr.) MEGHNA SHARMA
ellipsis

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OXFORD

In Code We Trust? Ethics in an Apolitical Illusion

The panel session on *"AI & Ethics"*, moderated by Prof. Rajavel Manoharan, brought together a group of distinguished voices in the field—Mr. Sridhar Dhulipala, Dr. Srinivas Padmanabhuni, Prof. (Dr.) Karthikeyan Periyasami, Prof. (Dr.) Sayendri Panchadhyayi, and Prof. Meghna Sharma. Together, they engaged in a nuanced and, at times, cautionary dialogue around the expanding influence of artificial intelligence and the ethical scaffolding that must accompany it.

A recurring theme throughout the session was the tension between *agency* and *intelligence*. Speakers underscored that despite AI's capacity to simulate cognitive functions, it lacks true agency—something inherently human. Intelligence without ethical discretion, they warned, can be misleadingly powerful. Generative AI, which has quickly permeated daily life, was critiqued for being widely consumed without adequate reflection on its embedded values and structural biases. The panel collectively emphasised that *agency*, not just intelligence, must be at the center of ethical AI discourse.

There was a deep concern about how technology, often mistaken as apolitical, becomes a tool manipulated by local political and economic forces. This illusion of neutrality can obscure the socio-political ramifications of AI deployment. The discussion drew attention to the importance of transparency—not just in algorithms but also in how humans consume and interpret AI outputs. A call was made to recognise AI not as an enforcement mechanism but as a *prescriptive tool*, one that must support human judgment rather than override it.

Issues of data—its collection, cleaning, and modelling—were also brought into focus. The panellists stressed that ethics cannot be an afterthought in this process. Instead, *a self-evaluation* of ethical positions must be embedded from the ground up. From training data to final deployment, the journey of AI must be inclusive, equitable, and accountable. There was also discussion on public administrative and banking systems, where AI-driven scoring mechanisms and payment incentives risk amplifying existing inequalities—especially when social credit systems enter the equation.

Concerns were raised about the seductive power of deepfakes and AI's role in shaping a *post-truth* world, where perception trumps fact. In such an environment, ethics cannot remain supplemental or aspirational—it must be foundational. The session also addressed the growing scope of AI in animation and other creative domains, where localised approaches and cultural sensitivities are often left behind in the race for efficiency and scalability.

A robust segment of the discussion focused on surveillance and the dystopian drift toward a *totalitarian vision*. As technology becomes more sophisticated, its use as a tool of cultural capitalism—amplifying dominant narratives while erasing the margins—was heavily critiqued. The panelists urged the need for regulatory frameworks that are not only legally sound but ethically rooted. They raised crucial questions: *When does bias become legally actionable? How should law engage with ethics, especially when ethics itself is a fluid, informal construct?*

Though global developments in AI regulation were acknowledged, it was clear that *legal mechanisms move slowly*, often unable to keep pace with rapid technological changes. The idea that ethics should *precede law* was put forth as a guiding principle. Self-regulation, though imperfect, was deemed vital—especially in countries like India, which is taking a distinctly *innovation-centric* approach rather than a strictly precautionary one.

In its entirety, the session did not just dwell on AI's challenges—it pushed for an ethical imagination that keeps pace with technical innovation. In a rapidly automating world, the speakers left no doubt that critical thinking, localised wisdom, and human agency must remain at the heart of AI's evolution.

Whitespace is a student-led magazine crafted by the Communication Design cohort, under the thoughtful mentorship of **Prof. Ginu George**, **Prof. Rohith Krishnan**, and **Prof. Nahusha K.**

Whitespace: A Magazine that Listens

The unveiling of Whitespace at Ellipsis was not just a launch – it was a moment of arrival for something that had been slowly, intuitively taking shape. This magazine, born out of quiet observation and instinctive pauses, refuses the pressure to be loud, didactic, or definitive. Whitespace is not interested in closure. It invites uncertainty and thrives in it. It listens to what is left unsaid, notices what is outside the frame, and treats absence not as lack but as presence in another form. In a cultural climate addicted to resolution, Whitespace dares to remain unresolved – and therein lies its pulse.

The cover itself is a deliberate paradox. Against a backdrop of grainy white, the eye meets an explosion – silhouettes tangled in bright, restless hues: magenta, yellow, green, blue, red. These figures, elastic in posture, are both celebratory and disoriented. There's movement, but no direction; noise, but no chaos. It pushes against the very notion of "emptiness," while reaffirming it through contrast. The title WHITESPACE, scrawled in a jagged, unapologetic pink, slices through the stillness like a question left hanging. It doesn't offer clarity. It asks you to lean in and make your own sense of it.

Inside, the images resist spectacle. They are fragments of motion paused – not for analysis, but for feeling. Their tonal minimalism is disarming: no hyperreality, no dramatic staging, no push to convince. Just people, light, texture – observed with patience and released without manipulation. Whitespace does not exoticise; it does not narrate. It watches. The effect is intimate, but never invasive. It leaves space for the subject to remain intact, unknowable, dignified.

The editorial rhythm mirrors this ethos. Some pages sprawl with air and silence; others close in, intimate and immediate. There is no linear logic. Instead, the magazine moves like memory – associative, looping, porous. It lets contradiction live. The sequencing itself becomes a kind of authorship, a visual edit that tells no story yet holds one together. You feel, but you're not told how to feel. You are allowed to linger. To be unsure.

Launched at Ellipsis, a space that privileges the unfinished, Whitespace feels perfectly at home. It does not seek to conclude. It seeks to hold the moment before conclusion – the pause, the breath, the uncertainty. And that's what makes it alive. It's not just a magazine. It's a refusal to resolve – and a celebration of all that happens in the waiting.

Prof. Roshan Machayya
PhD scholar I Professor I Writer & Musician I Ultra Runner

Futures on Fire: Prof. Roshan Machayya's Cautionary Ode to Imagination in an AI Age

Prof. Roshan Machayya dares to ask the questions most are too enthralled—or too terrified—to pose. At the expert talk session at Ellipsis titled "*Futures on Fire: Disruption, AI, & the Refusal to Let Imagination Die,*" the professor—also a PhD scholar, writer, musician, and ultra runner—didn't present a conventional lecture. Instead, he delivered a provocation: a thought-provoking and unsettling reflection on the high stakes of our rapidly unfolding techno-futures.

Rather than celebrating AI as an inevitable triumph of human ingenuity, Machayya recast it as a mirror to our collective disillusionment. AI, he argued, signals "the slow cancellation of future"—a phrase borrowed perhaps from Mark Fisher, but sharpened here with existential urgency. He warned that "whatever we know today becomes the mere fossil of tomorrow," suggesting that knowledge without imagination becomes dead weight—preserved but powerless.

The talk wasn't driven by fear of artificial intelligence as a runaway threat, but by the quieter horror of its normalisation. "AI – bankruptcy of imagination," he declared. "AI – end of this humanity." The loss is not just jobs or data privacy, but the erosion of our inner worlds—our capacity to think, to resist, to reimagine. In his framing, AI does not annihilate; it sedates. The danger lies not in spectacular disruption, but in seamless domestication. "The greatest fear," he noted, "is the domestication of AI"—the moment it becomes banal, invisible, and embedded into our very habits of thought.

Crucially, Machayya distinguished disruption from chaos. Disruption, in its truest form, has always carried creative potential. But when driven by systems that optimise for speed, conformity, and profit, disruption no longer unsettles power—it reinforces it. "AI as disruption of thoughts," he said, invoking not just the algorithms that learn from us, but those that learn to shape us.

Yet despite this sobering analysis, the talk was not devoid of hope. Its title—*the refusal to let imagination die*—was not just a subtitle, but a rallying cry. Machayya challenged the audience to resist passive consumption of technological futures, and instead reclaim the radical act of imagining differently. In an age where the future is being automated before it is even dreamed, his words struck a nerve: imagination is not a luxury—it is survival.

In this hour-long address, Prof. Machayya didn't just critique AI. He staged an intervention—against indifference, against intellectual surrender, and most of all, against the quiet death of our collective capacity to imagine otherwise.

Who has the authority to define *normal*?

Why do we still use English names for our streets and cities?

Newave’25: Disrupting the Colonial Common Sense

At the launch of *Newave’25*, the presence of **Prof. Gaurav Sharma** and **Prof. Abhishek Day** offered a formal prelude. But it was the students—**Samarth Bellere, Adithya HR, Keshav Sarin, Richa Kurian, and Sreepriya Subramaniyam**—who truly held the stage, interrogating not just the idea of colonisation but the very assumptions we carry as "normal." Their presentation was not a series of slides—it was a sharp and thoughtful provocation that asked the audience to think uncomfortably and urgently.

There’s a certain irony in the fact that conversations around colonisation still need to be introduced as radical or "engaging." That in 2025, a group of design students has to ask why our streets still carry the names of foreign rulers, why our cities are described in English as default, and why the global North remains top-centre on most world maps. These aren’t rhetorical flourishes; they are, in fact, the residues of coloniality—structures of thought that persist long after the colonisers have left.

"Normal isn’t neutral," the team argued. It’s a phrase that stings with precision, because the colonial legacy doesn’t just manifest in architecture, monuments, or policy. It lives in the seemingly benign defaults: the font we type in, the names we remember, the maps we

accept, and the aesthetics we inherit as good taste. When the students asked, "Who has the authority to define normal?", they weren't just inviting philosophical debate—they were launching a direct critique of institutionalised power, of design as complicit in this system.

To decolonise design is not simply to sprinkle in local motifs or use indigenous materials. It is a deeper ethical and political shift. It means questioning whose stories are told, whose languages are considered legible, whose pain is remembered, and whose futures are imagined. The student presentation leaned into these questions with courage and clarity. It wasn't a moral plea—it was a strategic unravelling.

The real brilliance of the session lay in its refusal to be polite. Too often, design education becomes the site of aspirational polish, where sleek portfolios matter more than critical politics. But here, the students chose to muddy those waters, placing ethics and identity above aesthetics and trend. In a room full of future designers, they asked not how to make things look better, but how to make things *mean* better.

The political charge of such a gesture cannot be overstated. In the global design economy, India is often seen as a service hub—good for execution, cheap for labour, exotic for inspiration. By reframing design through the lens of colonisation, these students were asserting the need to decolonise not just design processes, but also design *pedagogies* and *aspirations*. They were not just speaking truth to power—they were imagining power differently.

One might ask: what does it mean to challenge the centring of Europe on a map in a design classroom? The answer lies in understanding how deeply geography and design intertwine to produce worldview. If Europe is always central, then its history, its culture, its authority—by default—become central too. Changing that cartographic lens is not cosmetic. It is cognitive liberation.

Newave'25 is not a celebration of the new. It is a demand to look at the old with unflinching honesty. It is a reminder that even in 2025, the colonial ghosts are not in the museum; they are in the mirror. And perhaps the most radical thing young designers can do today is not invent a new future, but interrupt the inherited one.

NEWAVE
25

Day 3 ignited with a surge of inspiration as **Dr. Sahana D Gowda**, Registrar of RV University, took the stage with a powerful message that set the tone for the day—urging students to trust their creative instincts and push boundaries fearlessly. Clearly moved by the ingenuity and depth of the student work on display, she praised their efforts and encouraged them to keep questioning, experimenting, and evolving. Her words found an even stronger echo in the distinguished presence of Pro VC and Dean Prof. (Dr.) Anuradha Chatterjee and the Hon'ble guest, Prof. Pradyumna Vyas—an iconic figure in Indian design education—whose presence brought both stature and validation to the young creators. Together, their engagement transformed the day into a celebration of bold ideas, academic ambition, and the courage to imagine differently.

Breathing Fresh Air: A Closing Talk That Ignited Young Minds

The most fiery and engaging moment of the event came with its final session—a powerful closing talk by **Prof. Pradyumna Vyas** that left the hall brimming with purpose, clarity, and possibilities. With his characteristic lucidity and deep-rooted conviction, Prof. Vyas didn't just offer a reflection on design; he challenged every young mind in the room to rethink, reimagine, and reset their perspectives on the future of design, society, and their own purpose.

Opening his talk with warm thanks to PVC and Dean Anuradha Chatterjee, Prof. Vyas congratulated the students, appreciating their inquiries into what lies ahead. "You are already investigating the future," he said, commending their curiosity and commitment. And with that, he began to trace a compelling journey through design's evolution—from the Industrial Revolution to the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions, threading together historical insight with foresight.

Prof. Vyas reminded the audience that modern design as we know it began with mass production in the early 20th century, notably in 1919, when schools like the Bauhaus began shaping how we think of form, function, and user-friendliness. He evoked Geoffrey Bawa and other thought leaders to illustrate how regional aesthetics and global ideologies began intersecting. As GDP rose and production-consumption cycles intensified, he pointed to the advent of fashion, the birth of brands, and the shift from 'need' to 'want'—a world moving fast into "induced need" and "felt need."

Then came his powerful critique of the disposable age. "One-time use and throw," he said, has not only changed our buying behaviour but our value systems. Linking design directly with climate change, he called for a transformation: from ego-centric to eco-centric thinking. Here, he introduced the idea of zero waste, describing how waste is just someone else's raw material, urging a shift toward circular economies where sustainability is not an afterthought, but a starting point.

Drawing parallels with the third and fourth industrial revolutions, Prof. Vyas unpacked how the IT boom paved the way for Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, and the Internet of Things—forces now actively reshaping the design landscape. But he was quick to clarify: "Technology is an enabler, not a driver." He pushed students to recognise that Industry 5.0, as well as Society 5.0 (as conceptualised in Japan), places people, planet, and purpose at the forefront. "Breathing fresh air is more important," he emphasised, arguing for a new system-centric, transdisciplinary, and value-based design culture.

In his view, designers cannot work in isolation. The boundaries between disciplines are dissolving, and a designer today must be fluent not only in aesthetics and functionality, but also in emotional intelligence, accessibility, and ethics. "Design has no black or white," he declared, "only grey areas to navigate." Rationality must be balanced with empathy; knowledge must be paired with a point of view.

Prof. Vyas spoke with passion about India's potential as a global leader in frugal innovation and sustainable wisdom. He drew attention to the tacit knowledge of Indian artisans, praising those who "work in millimetres" and imagining their skills translating into "micron-level" precision for the future. This, he suggested, is where design for peace begins—by valuing what already exists and building ethically from the ground up.

He strongly advocated for a shift in the education system: moving away from instruction-centric colonial legacies toward thinking-centric, participatory learning. Rebelliousness, he suggested, is not defiance, but an essential part of design—to challenge, unlearn, and create anew. To this end, he proposed the idea of a new design agency, free from traditional governing structures, to evolve the curriculum in line with the dynamic needs of the world.

He concluded with a call to co-creation and interaction at the grassroots, encouraging students to work with people, not for them. “Design for values, not just for market value,” he urged, making a strong case for ethics and empathy in AI, and a redefinition of success itself.

As the applause echoed, it was clear that this was more than a keynote—it was a wake-up call, a roadmap, and a rallying cry. In the words of Pradyumna Vyas, to be a successful designer, one must first be a successful human being—rooted in optimism, driven by values, and fuelled by the courage to imagine otherwise.

Following the talk, PVC and Dean Prof. (Dr.) Anuradha Chatterjee presented a set of poetry books authored by Prof. (Dr.) Dwarika Prasad Uniyal, Vice Chancellor of RV University, to the esteemed guest Prof. Pradyumna Vyas—a gesture that blended the poetic spirit of creativity with the intellectual rigour of design.

Prof. Pradyumna Vyas, alongside PVC and Dean Prof. (Dr.) Anuradha Chatterjee, shared a celebratory moment with the winners of Ellipsis, marking a fitting close to a day that championed design excellence and future-forward thinking.

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Ai
Breaking boundaries
with every byte.
With
Ai
Collaborating
with intelligence,
anchored in values.
Against
Ai
Because we feel, not
compute.

Prof. Sanjeetha on the Power of Presentation: When Ideas Meet Impact

In a crisp and compelling address, Prof. Sanjeetha drew attention to an often underestimated but crucial dimension of design—the power of presentation. More than just the final polish or aesthetic flourish, she framed presentation as a transformative act, where ideas are not only expressed but *activated*.

She emphasised that in the world of design, how something is communicated often determines how it is received, understood, and remembered. Presentation, she argued, is not merely about visuals or layout—it's about intent, clarity, and emotional connection. A powerful idea risks falling flat if not presented with care, and even the most modest concepts can leave lasting impressions when thoughtfully articulated.

In her words, presentation is where discipline meets persuasion, where form gives shape to thought, and where designers learn to speak not just with their work, but through it. It is, she reminded the audience, an essential skill that bridges the gap between vision and impact—turning prototypes into provocations, and reflections into movements.

Prof. Sanjeetha's insight served as a quiet but essential reminder: in the creative journey, presentation isn't the end—it's the beginning of dialogue.

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Prof. Rajavel Manoharan: A Reflection on Commitment, Continuity, and the Currents of Change

Taking to the stage with measured calm and deep sincerity, Prof. Rajavel Manoharan offered a moment of reflection—grounding the audience in the legacy and promise of the annual event. In his brief yet resonant address, he spoke of commitment—not as a passing ideal but as a steady force that shapes the institution's culture and momentum.

He reminisced about past exhibitions, recalling how each edition had responded to its moment in time—showcasing student work that was not just creative but also critically engaged with the world around it. "Each year has been a conversation," he noted, "a collective pause to ask where we stand, and where we're headed." This year, that conversation took a sharp and timely turn toward Artificial Intelligence, a subject he acknowledged as both urgent and unavoidable in the current design discourse. The theme, he said, served as a timely reflection—not just on the role of AI in design practice, but on its deeper implications for society, ethics, and education.

With quiet optimism, Prof. Rajavel reaffirmed the institution's intention to evolve with the times, while staying rooted in its core values. He concluded by assuring the audience that this was not an end, but a part of a growing continuum: "We will be back next year," he said, with a confident smile—signalling not just another iteration, but another step forward in a journey of creative inquiry and critical reflection.

CURATORSHIP

Convenors (Left to Right)
Prof. Sanjeetha M.
Prof. Khushboo Doshi
Prof. Vivek Kishore Thashnath

The curators of this exhibition operate from a place of critical attentiveness—choosing not to present the works as answers, but as propositions. What unfolds is a careful choreography of images, texts, and pauses that privileges presence over performance. Instead of organising around a theme, the curators lean into an ethics of care and ambiguity, where meaning is not imposed but suggested. By resisting explanatory labels and sequencing, they open up interpretive space—where the viewer is invited not just to look, but to sit with what they do not immediately understand. This is a refusal of spectacle in favour of intimacy.

At its core, the curation becomes a gesture of listening. Through fractured compositions, domestic moments, and deliberate silences, the works challenge dominant visual cultures that demand coherence and legibility. The viewer is made acutely aware of their position—not as a passive observer, but as someone implicated in the act of reading, translating, and possibly misrecognising. The curators do not flatten identity into digestible forms but allow for contradictions, frictions, and soft rebellions to remain visible. In doing so, they remind us that curation can be not just a form of selection, but a practice of holding space—for uncertainty, for multiplicity, and for the quiet dignity of unfinished narratives.

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A Bow to the Universe

They end not with fanfare, but with a quiet, satisfied bow—an unspoken gesture more profound than applause. To them, it's not merely a sign of completion but a sacred act of gratitude—a way to honour the journey, the stage, and the invisible forces that allowed their dream to take shape. In that humble arc of the body lies a deep reverence for process over praise, for fulfilment over fame—a silent thank you to the universe for letting them manifest what once lived only in imagination.

Echoes of a Joyful Finale

There could be no more fulfilling conclusion than giving students the space to simply unwind, to breathe in the moment, and to celebrate their small yet significant triumphs—each one a quiet milestone etched deeply into memory. In the end, they didn't need grand gestures or formal farewells. Through impromptu vocal performances, they sang their hearts out to one another, filling the space with laughter, warmth, and a sense of togetherness that words couldn't fully capture—a spontaneous, heartfelt finale that wrapped the journey in joy and left it beautifully complete.

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