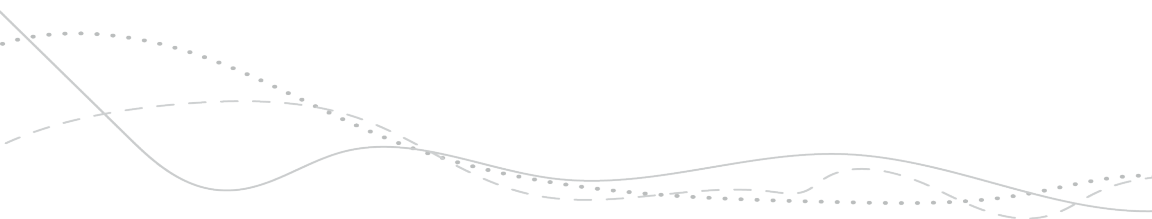


Crazy Balls in the Workspace

By Aasma Tulika

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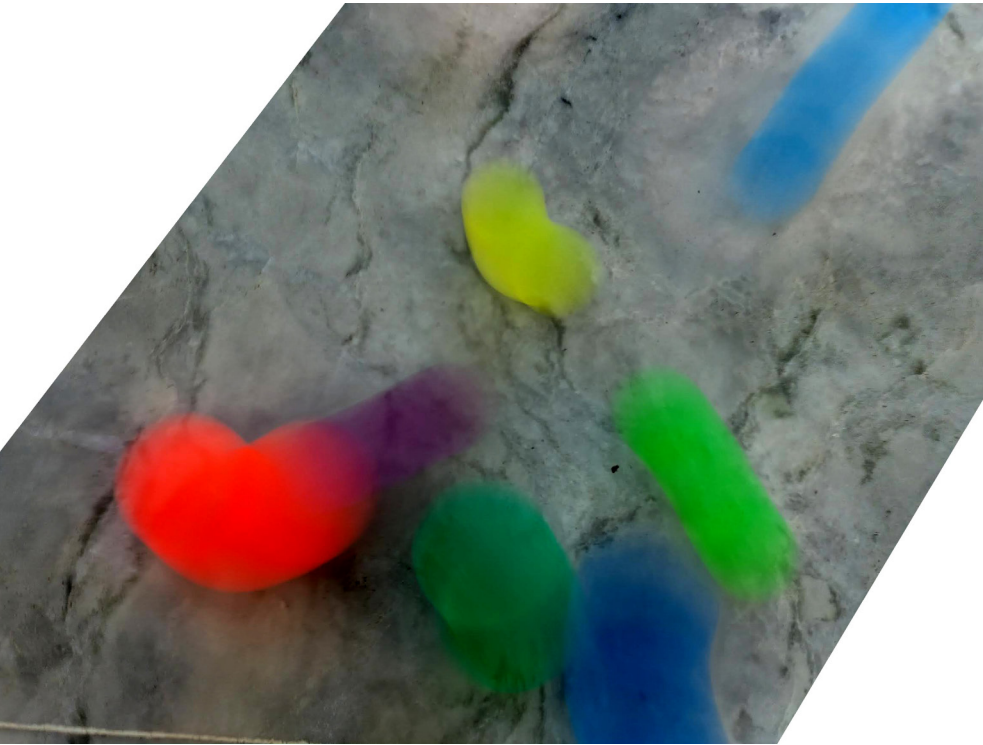


Steampunk thumps, engine hiss and train horns. “The wire is very loose.” “Is it connected to Surbhi’s?” “There’s a power cut.” “You can switch on the bluetooth speaker.” “This will do, but keep one for the light.” “I’m turning this channel off for now.” “Bluetooth mode.” breakkkk “Padma, do we have a 3.5mm audio cable?” “regeneration X” “Now, increase the volume.” “Nahi. Hmm... Nahi. Hmm...” “Haha, how can you?!” harmonic distortions “that’s interesting music.” An unidentified object whistles its way through the sky. “Zameen kha gayi aasman kaise kaise.” “Restart da, restart da, restart da, check for updates.” drum breaks “Nice.” “It’s going with the flow yaar.” meows from a megaphone. “Will Ullu come?” meows from the megaphone continue. “No chance Ullu is coming to this room. She knows what is happening.” A rooster’s call interrupts a gayatri mantra from the megaphone. drum breaks continue. “Hey Padma, Surbhi ko poochh recorder kahaan hai. Oh wait, it’s already recording right?”



While figuring out how to mix a 3 hour recording of a jam, I got reminded of King Tubby playing his mixing board while making dub. To dub is to double, duplicate, repeat, do twice. Composed of echoes and reverbs, Tubby reversioned records by severing sounds

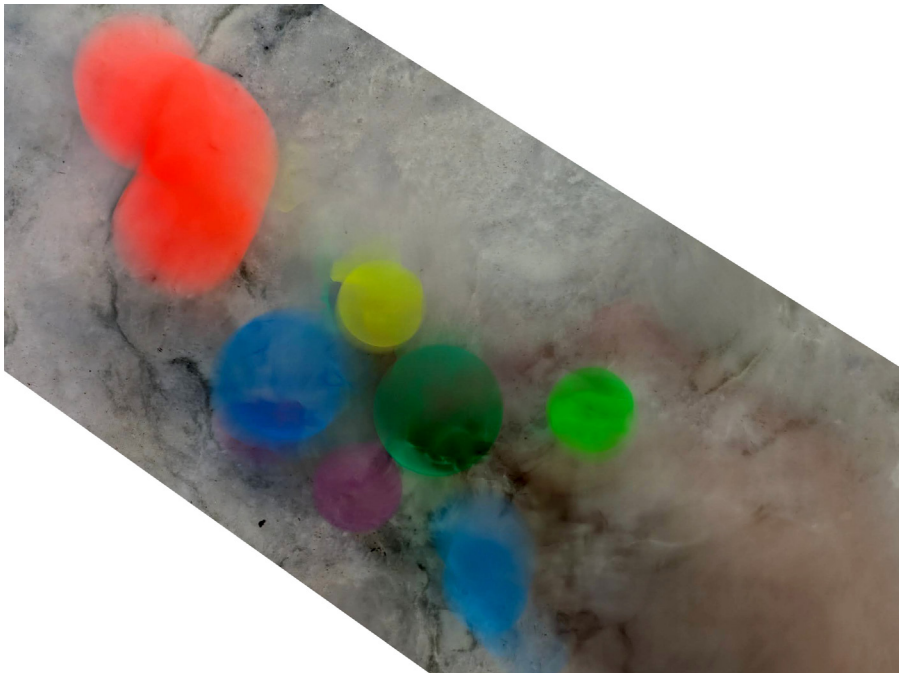
from their source and let them spin off each other and other sources. Dub makes for a conversation style which is not just about what is spoken but effectuates what Louis Chude-Sokei calls as an architecture of machine spaces. It relays an economy of sound which is distinctly oral, imagined across time zones, and dependent on networks heard through communal spaces of radios and sound systems. It is a scene of music resonating from a milieu that recognizes proximate and distant associations with lifeworlds, recalled through breaks between location and memory.



The chatter in the mix was unintentionally caught in the recording of a living room turned workspace. It wasn't meant to be heard again but got recognized in the process of making a track edit. Someone made banana bread, someone fixed a crashed laptop, someone shared their story about visiting India to find their biological parents, someone passed a J around, someone vented about a rather crappy experience of negotiating payment with the organisers of an arts festival.

What does the recognition of chatter give to work?

Undemanding of permissions about where and how and what to say, it expresses an intimacy with life in the time of work. Stories roll in unexpected directions, get fed back and recalled as anecdotes, reversioned differently each time they are remembered by others present. Time spent chit-chatting echoes the architecture of a workspace where everyday processes of living juggle with protocols of making work.



Listening to banter points to thresholds of a scene. These thresholds aren't neutral. They could be threatening or welcoming depending on how expressions of life get hosted as sources of imaginative inquiry. The police monitor chatter to control unauthorized activity, and university authorities kill chatter with non-disclosure agreements. What gets emphasized, diffused, dropped out or elaborated, signal degrees of trust in the workspace. The stuff of chatter is for recollection, inquiries repeated across circuits, flowing in and out of scenes without the pressure to follow up.



Developed alongside a series of Whatsapp notes which were exchanged amongst some friends after attending an event where artists discussed how lives get shaped through the chatter of a milieu.