

The Chickpete Metro Station Public Art Project

Yash Bhandari & Aliyeh Rizvi

The Chickpete Metro Station is located in the historic Pete market area where the urban settlement of Bengaluru was built in 1537. In keeping with the spatial arrangements of the time, the fortified market-town was designed around the intersection of two broad thoroughfares; the Doddapete that ran from North to South and the Chickpete that went from West to East. In time, it grew into a bustling commercial centre that was occupied by several mercantile and artisanal communities from surrounding regions and even faraway Western India. It is now the largest wholesale market area in the city and also possesses a rich cultural diversity.

The Public Art Project situated at the Chickpete Metro Station, was curated by Art in Transit, a public art project and a collaboration between the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation and the Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology that sees the Metro stations as sites for creative learning and action. Helmed by Aliyeh Rizvi (Curatorial Process and Strategy), Amitabh Kumar (Co-curatorial), Yash Bhandari (Project Management), Arzu Mistry, and Niret Alva, this project was visualised as a place-based intervention that would engage with the rich socio-cultural and historical narratives of the area as a part of an ongoing creative inquiry.

The metaphor of a plant and its roots was explored to represent the metro station - extending from the platform level to the plaza, the overhead structures that mark its presence and the market area beyond. The overhead structures were seen as symbols of how the

station itself is rooted in the area but the underground environment offers the opportunity to expand/spread out beyond this idea. This metaphor was used to activate the area's history, ecology, cultural diversity and economic vibrancy and gradually uncover its complex layers - all that lies at eye level and below it - ideas of conception, transformation, transactions, people and their connection to place, the relationship between identity and belonging, urbanisation, change and loss. This view also included the area's various transitions over the centuries from a densely forested area with waterbodies and rocky outcrops to its current built form.

As part of the material gathering phase, the artists (students, faculty from Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design and Technology, invited local, national and international artists and designers) followed a rigorous research process of exploration, reflection, interpretation and re-narration or translation in order to arrive at a curatorial strategy and themes for their place-based visual storytelling. In-depth interviews were conducted with local populations, sights, sounds and textures were recorded, text and visual references were collected, and the narrow streets of this crowded market were mapped during story walks. Themes were developed and a narrative flow was mapped to include the ten sites that had been identified initially. The artworks that emerged as a result were then taken to site and symbolically 'returned' to the Pete, in order to facilitate meaningful connections between people and place, bridge Bengaluru's past, present and future and build pride of place.



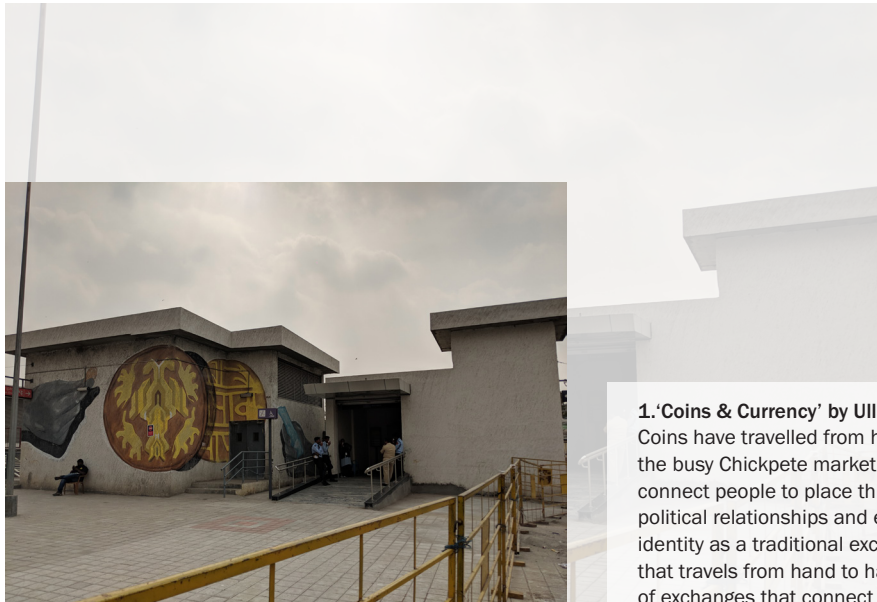


Figure 1

1. 'Coins & Currency' by Ullas Hydoor

Coins have travelled from hand to hand through the busy Chickpete market area for centuries. They connect people to place through economic, socio-political relationships and establish Chickpete's identity as a traditional exchange centre. The coin that travels from hand to hand here, is the currency of exchanges that connect me to you and the city.

2. 'Fragrance' by Anpu Varkey

Flowers as a social currency; the flowers that come to the market at dawn draw fragrant pathways across the city by day - in your hair, in a basket, on a cycle, as a bouquet or an offering for a God.

3. 'Mapping the Karaga' by Yash Bhandari and Geethanjali AR

The Karaga bearer carries the jasmine flower around the Pete during the traditional *Karagashaktiyotsava*, a Pete festival dedicated to the Goddess Draupadi, thus uniting trader and artisan, house and shop, temple and *dargah*, priest and Goddess, water, earth and fire.



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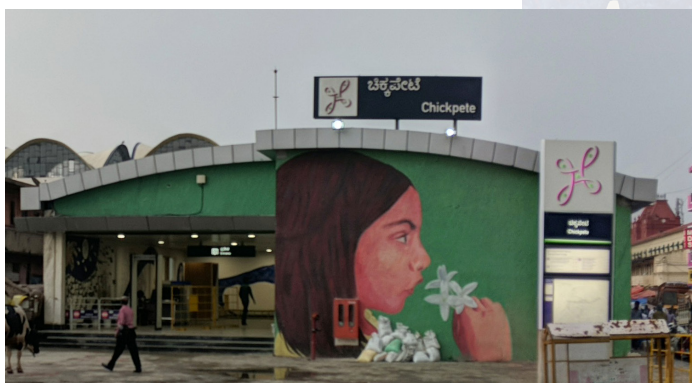


Figure 2

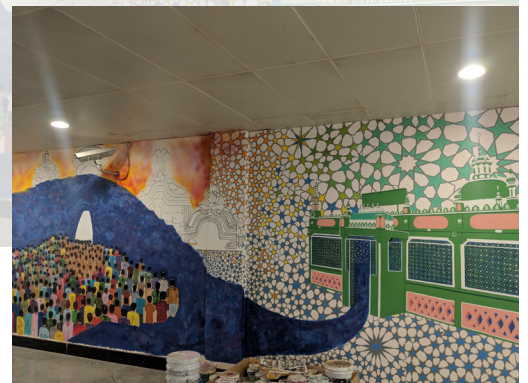
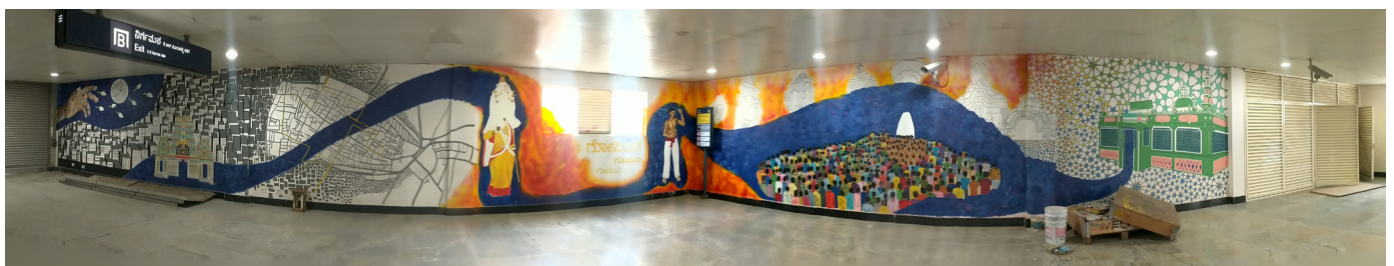


Figure 3



4. 'The Fabric of Our Times' by Osheen Gupta

A handloom weaver vanishes under the dominance of the computer-generated punch cards of the power loom, even as he is caught in a time-warp, enmeshed between traditional practices and the demands of modern-day technologies.

5. 'Pete People' by Abhimanyu Ghimiray

An exploration of form and character as seen through the migrant communities, specialised activities, goods and services that define the area and its unique identity. This multiculturalism defines the Pete even today.



Figure 4



Figure 5

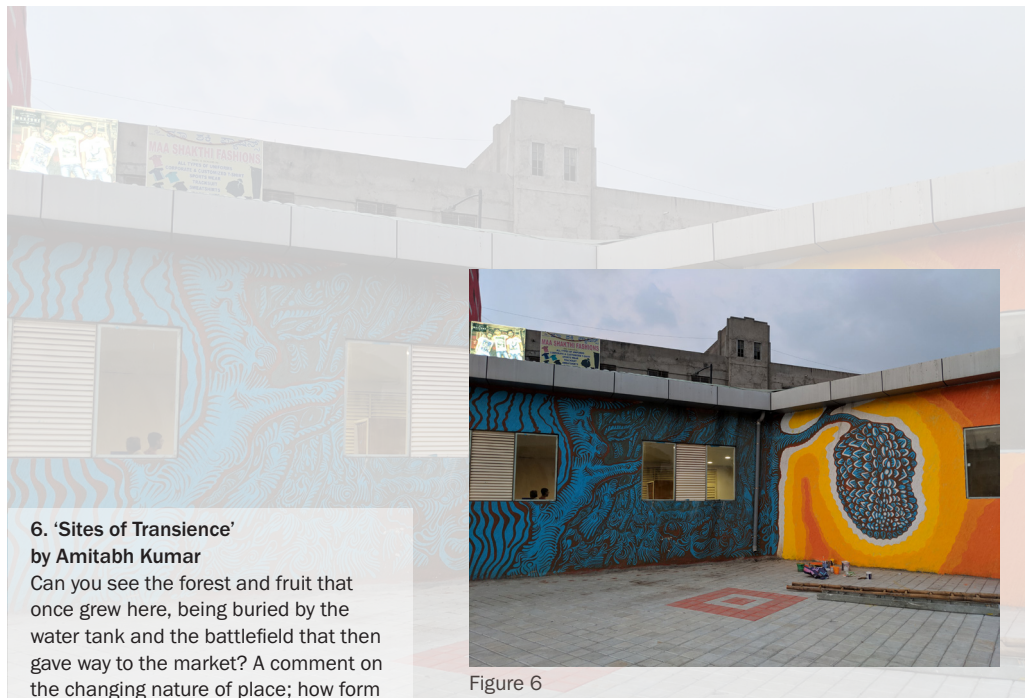


Figure 6

6. 'Sites of Transience' by Amitabh Kumar

Can you see the forest and fruit that once grew here, being buried by the water tank and the battlefield that then gave way to the market? A comment on the changing nature of place; how form affects function, meaning and value through the ages.

7. 'Veeragallu' by Shreevyas

A new commemorative hero stone, or Veeragallu, embedded with stories of the city. The first part (Main Wall) depicts the story of Bengaluru. The second part depicts a map of the 'Bengaluru Pete' and the third part depicts the various markets inside the Pete.



Figure 7



Figure 8

8. 'Im-materiality' by Fabrice G and Valentine

Reach out and see if you can touch the flattened, fragmented shapes, colours and textures of the city. Questioning the meaning and representation of place through materials, textures and patterns. Looking at recycling systems such as the Jaali Mohalla near the Chickpete Station- what was and will be.



Figure 9

9. 'Layers of Movement' by Diya Pinto

The deepest is the oldest. Representing the KR Market area's layers of time - ancient tank bed, colonial battleground, modern market area, through examining a layered sense of movement, bottom to top and inside-outside that is in constant flux. It is hard to move when everything around me is moving - from the bottom to the surface, from the inside to the outside, from the lakebed to the market, from the past to the future.

10. 'Where are you coming from?' by Puia

'I come from the mountains', said the apple to the dragon fruit. 'How did you get here?' The fruit in the market is seen as a metaphor for trade, migration, new dreams and opportunity.



Figure 10

Note: All photographs are taken by Yash Bhandari.

Related Readings

Geechegalus. (n.d.). Chickpete Metro Station. <https://geechugalu.wordpress.com/chickpete-metro-station/>

Pendharkar, Vrushal (2021). Namma Ooru, Namma Neeru: Art that connects a metro station, groundwater conservation and traditional livelihoods.' Citizen Matters. September 1, 2021. <https://bengaluru.citizenmatters.in/c'ubbon-park-metro-station-art-water-murals-66336>

Srishti Manipal. 2023. 'Art in Transit.' <https://srishtimanipalinstitute.in/centers-and-labs/art-in-transit-com/future-relics>

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