

PRESSADISE LOST

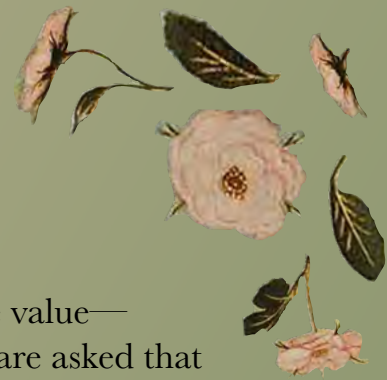


PRE-FEST ISSUE

2

APOGEE English Press

Editorial



Shine. It blinds us. We crave shiny things. We accept shiny things at face value—nothing seems imperfect or questionable. But, it's when these questions are asked that the sparkle fades. Things are seen as they were made. As a certain masked villain once observed, “Everything that glitters ain't fishscale”.

The job of the press is to ask these questions, to go behind the scenes and expose things for what they really are. The press acts as a voice of reason and rational thinking amidst all the shiny speeches and hopeful promises that make their daily rounds.

Presenting the second pre-fest issue of Pressadise Lost.

It's got CoStAAn interviews, a speaker bio, an event review, and our take on this year's theme, “The Digitized Renaissance”. As we inch closer to the culmination of a first-of-its-kind online fest, we hope to reveal the hard work that has gone into making it.

The Team

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Shaz, Shreya, Vishnu



EVENT WATCH

IEEE Hackathon

SUBMISSIONS OPEN

Game Dev Workshop

7 PM, MARCH 16

Arduino Workshop

5 PM, MARCH 17

Chess Tournament

5 PM, MARCH 18

Internet Treasure Hunt

5 PM, MARCH 18



DVM

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE COSTAAN

With less than a week to go for the first-ever online edition of APOGEE, Devansh Agarwal, the CoStAA of the Department of Visual Media (DVM), gave his insights on the transition of the platform for the fest and the role of DVM in it.

DVM is responsible for making the theme release videos, promotional videos, curtain-raiser videos, website and application for the fest. With the shift to the online mode and in alignment with this year's theme—"The Digitized Renaissance", Devansh mentioned that they are trying to 'resurrect' last year's APOGEE in a digitised manner.

He highlighted that this year's APOGEE is going to be conducted on the virtual platform gather.town where DVM, in collaboration with ADP, is recreating the map of BITS. He added that the graphics would be similar to Pokémon Go and will allow people to interact with each other and their surroundings. All the kernel events will also be held on gather.town. This platform is supported on Windows, macOS, and can also be accessed on a mobile phone.

On being asked about the change in the functioning of DVM in the online format, Devansh stated that they had adapted quite comfortably to the current mode. It has become logistically easier for members to switch between video meets of different teams, as opposed to travelling to other rooms on campus. One of the major problems faced by the department is to share considerably large-sized files, which could have been done quickly using hard drives on campus. Devansh asserted that the team is not facing any other issues apart from this, and is working tirelessly to make the platform's user experience as smooth as possible.

Devansh is looking forward to the fest as the platform is the culmination of the time and effort spent by DVM. He added that the online fest is new for everyone—CoStAA, the clubs, and the coordinators—which is why they had to innovate in terms of planning. He hopes that their plans will be executed to perfection and thus make the fest a success.





ADP

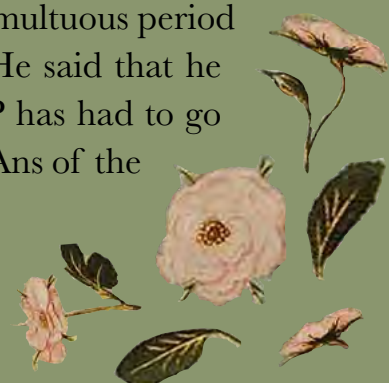
AN INTERVIEW WITH THE COSTAAN

In a chat with the APOGEE English Press, Vaibhav Bansal, the CoStAAAn of the Department of Art, Design and Publicity (ADP), shared his thoughts regarding the online nature of the upcoming fest and talked about the work done by his department.

ADP is responsible for creating the various art installations that are seen around campus during an offline APOGEE. They are also in charge of collaborating with external media houses for fest publicity. Vaibhav said that in view of the fest being online this year, they have partnered with digital media organisations like DU Express, Education Tree, and New Delhi Times. He also mentioned that they are collaborating with the Department of Visual Media (DVM) to create an interesting surprise for BITSians and guests alike.

Vaibhav added that while an online fest would help overcome the geographical barriers to drawing footfall to Pilani, he acknowledged that students all over India have become fatigued with events going online and that this might throw up new challenges for the organisers. He said that they were well-equipped to handle the increased workload because of the absence of trained first-year students, thanks to other members of the department who had stepped up and contributed in various capacities. When asked about the partial reopening of the campus for certain batches of students, Vaibhav commented that it had not affected the planning of CoStAA in any manner.

Vaibhav said that there was an increased focus on digital outreach—something that he has grown to acknowledge as an integral part of the outreach work that takes place for a fest. His department also wishes to continue collaborating with digital media houses for the coming fests as well. According to Vaibhav, his stint as the CoStAAAn during a tumultuous period taught him how to be resilient and adapt to changing circumstances. He said that he was looking forward to the fest and believed that the changes that ADP has had to go through to work in this tumultuous time would help guide future CoStAAAns of the department.





Behavioural Economics

A WORKSHOP

Karan Arora, the founder and CEO of the Behavioural Economics and Science Team (BEAST), hosted an interactive session on “Behavioural Finance and Investment Strategies” on March 14, 2021, as a part of a series of pre-APOGEE workshops. Having completed his MSc in Behavioural and Economic Science from the University of Warwick, he founded BEAST to democratise economic science and help people make better decisions.

The session started with him introducing a fictitious character, Homo Economicus, who makes economic decisions that are absolutely independent of emotions and external biases. This fictitious character has unparalleled computational abilities and can accurately weigh his losses and gains. Mr Arora clarified that the existence of these characters that consistently beat the market is impossible as investors rarely tend to buy undervalued stocks.

He gave insights on how prejudiced our measures can become once unmediated forecasts begin to blur our judgements. To reinforce his claim, he conducted a thought experiment for ten minutes. The audience was given three questions including the famous Linda Problem. The majority of responses explained the behavioural traits accurately, and a decent number of participants helped in maintaining a quality sample set. He explained each of the three solutions in great detail and concluded that merely framing a problem in a positive tone can result in starkly different judgements.

He asserted that a company’s past records, retrievability of its name, and familiarity with the company are the major factors that influence investors’ psychology. He supported this stance of markets being driven by overconfidence by citing Morgan Stanley’s projection report on eBay, which predicted a 7% overall growth rate, a value more than the global growth rate.

He further added that losses drive risky behaviour and increase the chances of making irrational choices. He explained how consumers tend to hold on to non-performing assets for far too long but sell their winning assets too early. Since Homo Sapiens are very different from Homo Economicus, their investments are blinded by overpessimism and overoptimism which leads to volatility in the markets. Therefore, he urged all future investors to use heuristics over biases while investing their assets. These heuristics can be developed with thorough knowledge and awareness. Tools such as savings trackers can help in keeping one’s assets under control and can prevent one from investing based on misleading predictions.

Towards the end of his talk, Mr Arora urged the audience to not be blindly optimistic with regard to the ‘winners’, such as certain cryptocurrencies, that are all the rage amongst investors these days. A few years ago, a similar hype surrounded retirement investment plans which led to a stagnation in their market value. Mr Arora expects Bitcoin to also suffer such a fate in the coming years. He concluded the talk by answering some queries regarding current market evaluations and offering a few tips on building a career in behavioural economics.





Avijit Dutt

PAPYRUS TRAILS SPEAKER #1

Avijit Dutt is a filmmaker, actor, theatre director, professor, and communications consultant. He has been a social activist and interventionist with seminal work in Child Welfare and Consumer Affairs.

He earned his master's degree in English Literature from Calcutta University and joined St. Paul's School, Darjeeling as an English faculty. He has directed and acted in over 50 productions in Bengali, Hindi, and English. He has also featured in widely renowned and well-critiqued Bollywood and Hollywood projects such as Delhi Crime, No One Killed Jessica, The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, and Madras Cafe.

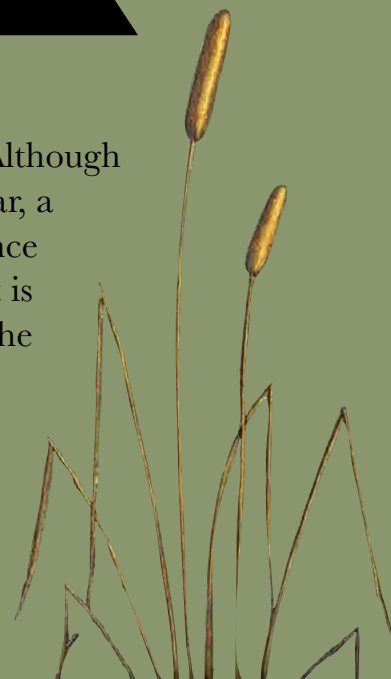
Mr Dutt is Founder Director and Chief Motivator at Enable, a social advisory and intervention organisation. It has filed for two patents—one for a biometrically accessed bio-toilet for women and the other for a solution that looks at helping the under-served by providing pertinent healthcare solutions. He has also worked with UNICEF and NHRC on child abuse. His featurette titled Akkar Bakkar was presented at the 63rd Cannes Film Festival in 2010 and was also shown in Parliament to hasten the Child Bill.

Catch Avijit Dutta as Speaker #1 of Papyrus Trails this APOGEE.

The Digitized Renaissance

ABOUT THE THEME

The theme for this year's APOGEE is The Digitized Renaissance. Although mention of a period in history over three centuries old might seem peculiar, a careful look at the period uncovers the indelible impact left by the Renaissance on current times. As we inch closer towards The Digitized Renaissance, it is essential to understand the relevance of the Renaissance by exploring the legacy of some of the most influential people from back then. Through the second pre-fest issue of the APOGEE English Press, we take a look at three of the most prominent figures from the Renaissance: Leonardo da Vinci, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Michelangelo Buonarroti.



NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI

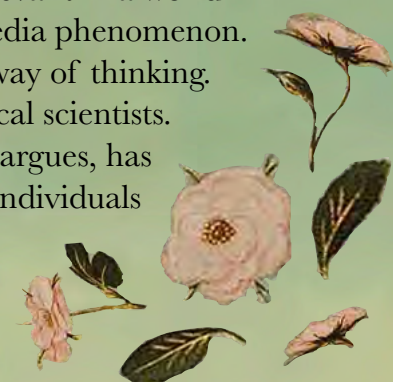
The Renaissance in Western Europe was a period in history characterised by a “rebirth” of intellectual and artistic appreciation of Graeco-Roman culture that gave rise to the modern individual. There emerged a critical attitude amongst scholars—called humanists—towards texts, authorities, and the study of the past.

Amongst the illustrious humanists, there was one who came to acquire a fearsome and notorious reputation—Niccolò Machiavelli. A philosopher, writer, and political thinker, Machiavelli started his career as a diplomat representing Florence. He was responsible for executing numerous defence strategies, during the course of which he interacted with many dignitaries. One such luminary, Cesare Borgia, had an indelible impact on his ideology.

Around 1512, after being accused of conspiring against the Florentine Republic, Machiavelli was temporarily exiled. His fallout with the Medici family—an influential Italian banking family known for their patronage of Renaissance artists—has been cited as a contributing factor for his downfall. It was during this period that he set out to write his most infamous piece of work: *The Prince*. Inspired by Borgia’s quest for power, Machiavelli set out to determine ways in which political power could be retained. He argued that a political leader must be excused for performing acts of violence and deception. With the belief that moral and religious values are not essential for governance, he supported the idea of a ruthless and shrewd tyrant. Needless to say, *The Prince* only served to further alienate him from Florentine society.

Contemporary analysis of Machiavelli’s work has unveiled some of the salient features of his work. His emphasis on the disjointed nature of politics and universally-accepted moral systems has been touted as one of the most groundbreaking ways of conceptualising politics. Machiavelli was the first theorist to explicitly prioritise reason over religion. His theories, being deeply rooted in pragmatism, hold much credence in modern politics. From Donald Trump’s usage of the Bible as a political prop to Indian party leaders alternating between places of worship before elections, politicians around the world seem to emulate his principle—‘it is better to appear moralistic and humane than actually being so’. His legacy is such that the term “Machiavellian”—used to refer to someone who is cunning, shrewd, and has little regard for moral values—has found its way in today’s [political discourse](#).

Despite popular opinion, Machiavelli was not a proponent of being immoral just for the sake of it. He was a realist who theorised that morality must not take precedence in the realm of politics. This theory isn’t limited to the political sphere but has rather found its way in almost every aspect of the hypercompetitive society we live in—business, education and family. Arguing that there is no such thing as an ideal order that society can conform to, Machiavelli was one of the first proponents of leading a truly practical life—one that is free from the shackles of religion and societal norms. This is especially relevant in a world that is governed by an incessant desire to fit in, owing to the social media phenomenon. His theories, albeit rooted in despotic values, encouraged a strategic way of thinking. *The Prince* still remains a controversial subject for scholars and political scientists. ‘The ends, no matter how immoral, justify the means,’ as it famously argues, has come to reflect the current political landscape which is plagued with individuals and parties leaving no stone unturned to be successful. *The Prince* remains one of the most important writings which has influenced modern-day international relations, politics, and society.



LEONARDO DA VINCI

Leonardo da Vinci, known as the Renaissance Man, is amongst the most influential figures that shaped and led the Renaissance in Europe. He worked as a painter, architect, engineer, anatomist, cartographer, and scientist.

Da Vinci was born out of wedlock to a notary in the town of Vinci, near Florence, on April 15, 1452. He didn't receive much formal education. However, he learnt greatly through his observation of nature. He developed the habit of recording everything he found and saw in journals, several of which have been preserved to this day and give an insight into his thinking.

He started learning human anatomy at the age of 14, when he began his apprenticeship under Andrea del Verrocchio, an artist in Florence. He was eventually given permission to dissect human corpses at various hospitals and he used this to further his understanding of the human body. His journals contain detailed drawings and notes about the human skeleton, reproductive system, the development of a foetus, and the muscles of the arms and legs.

The Vitruvian Man, a sketch by Leonardo da Vinci, shows a man inscribed in a circle and a square. It represents da Vinci's concept of ideal human body proportions. The Mona Lisa and The Last Supper are two of the most significant paintings from the Renaissance era. These, as well as his other works, demonstrate his understanding of anatomy, perspective, light, and shadows.

Da Vinci was also an accomplished engineer. Some of his inventions that have made their way into practical use include the strut bridge, the bobbin winder in sewing machines, the rolling mill, and a machine to test tensile strength.

In 1502, da Vinci had designed a bridge to be built over a river in Constantinople. However, it was never made and his notes were lost for over 400 years, only to be rediscovered in 1952. A Norwegian architect built a bridge in 2001 inspired by da Vinci's design. A group of MIT engineers produced a 1/500th scale version in 2019 following da Vinci's exact design, and found that it was stable and could function perfectly.

Leonardo da Vinci introduced a new line of thought—science and art can complement each other and can be approached together. This idea remains relevant today. It takes creativity to make scientific breakthroughs and it takes logic and principles to produce beautiful art.

Da Vinci possessed a childlike curiosity to know more about everything in nature: things that others may write off as irrelevant. He never stopped learning. His knowledge came from observation of the world around him. He studied the world at large and applied his understanding of one field to the other to become the polymath we recognise him as today.



MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI

Michelangelo Buonarroti is one of the three giants of the Florentine High Renaissance. Often considered by scholars as one of the most influential Renaissance artists, he was a sculptor, painter, artist, and poet. He created some of the most renowned sculptures in history—David and Pieta. He also painted two of the most noteworthy frescoes in Western art—the scenes from Genesis on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and The Last Judgment on its altar wall. A huge volume of his works has survived the test of time, making him the most well-documented artist of the 16th century.

Michelangelo was born on March 6, 1475 in Caprese, a small town near Arezzo, Tuscany. As a boy, he was sent to Florence to study under the Humanist Francesco da Urbino. He never showed an interest in his schooling and would spend his time replicating paintings put up in churches. The city of Florence, being the cultural and intellectual center of Italy at that time, was where he honed his skills and created one of his most famous works—the statue of David.

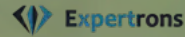
Michaelangelo introduced realism into art. He depicted the human body with remarkable accuracy and challenged the conventional ways of thinking which considered painting the human body sinful. He developed his own style at an early age which was greatly admired at first, and then imitated by other artists of the era. One of the qualities most admired by his contemporaries was his *terribilità*—a sense of awe-inspiring grandeur. This led to the creation of Mannerism: the next major movement in Western art which lasted until the end of the 16th century. Unlike the High Renaissance artists, Mannerists had an obsession with style and technique which they deemed more important than the subject of the art itself. This style of art is characterized by elegance and artificiality. The figures in Mannerist works have graceful yet unrealistically elongated limbs, small heads, and stylized facial features. This focus on technique and artificial elegance caused Mannerism to be associated with intellectual sophistication in later years.

Michelangelo changed Renaissance ideals by helping people view art and artists in a different light—the world began recognizing them as essential additions to society. He impacted the Western world by setting new standards for painting, sculpting, and poetry. His works even influenced the Christian faith and its concept of God—one of the most significant contributions being The Creation of Adam on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. Michelangelo's portrait of God was one where he had a compassionate face and exhibited human emotions. This was unlike the stoic, unfeeling image of God that had existed before. While this interpretation was radical, it has become the definitive image of God in Christianity.

Michelangelo's works still draw attention and interest in today's society. Through his work, he has helped form the way art is perceived.



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