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Last date of application: 15 May 2025



Open Space Documentary Arts 2025

1 yr Diploma Programme starting 12th July



Auroville Film Institute in collaboration with Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh calls applications for:

OPEN SPACE DOCUMENTARY ARTS PROGRAMME

1 Yr Diploma starting **12 July 2025**

A multi-site, dynamically designed, production oriented diploma programme, incorporating experiential learning modules in Auroville-Pondicherry and Ladakh.

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At HIAL, we've always believed that the best learning happens beyond exams and rote memorization. With the Open Space Documentary Arts Program, we are opening doors—literally and figuratively—for students to step out, see the world through their lens, and bring unheard stories to light. This is not just a course; it's a movement to reimagine education and filmmaking as tools for change. Join us, and let's create a new cinematic language together!

- **Sonam Wangchuk,**
Engineer, Innovator and Education Reformist,
Founding Director, Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh
Consultant, OSDA Programme.

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Some stories can't be contained within four walls, and neither should learning. The Open Space Documentary Arts Program is a playground for curious minds—where cameras replace textbooks, real-world experiences become classrooms, and creativity knows no borders. In collaboration with the Auroville Film Institute, we're crafting a space where storytelling meets exploration, and where students don't just watch the world but engage with it. Are you ready to tell the story only you can tell?

**- Gitanjali J Angmo,
Social Entrepreneur and Educationist,
Founder & CEO, Himalayan Institute of Alternatives, Ladakh
Consultant, OSDA Programme.**

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Film schools are usually stationary, however films, especially documentaries, unfurl on-site at real locations among real people. So what if a film school moves from site to site, what if we can take cinema-centric learning journeys cutting through distances and dichotomies, arriving at the essential emotions and existential conditions, across a diversity of people and states ? Open Space Documentary Arts Programme embraces this approach – making mobility, flexibility and trans-cultural-disciplinarity a key to this programme.

**- Richa Hushing,
Documentary Filmmaker and Editor,
Founding Director & Chief Executive, Auroville Film Institute
Curriculum Designer & Programme Director, OSDA Programme.**

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One may wonder—why Auroville, why Ladakh, and how do these two come together in a filmmaking curriculum? It's not merely about geographical extremes; it's about a civilizational spectrum. The course invites participants to cinematically engage with the present actualities of these two unique cityscapes—one ancient, the other futuristic. They thus offer us the ground for this art of enquiry, of seeing and of learning.

**-Rrиву Laha,
Documentary Filmmaker and Cinematographer,
Founding Director & Chief Creative, Auroville Film Institute
Co-Director & Mentor, OSDA Programme.**

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OVERVIEW:

Open Space Documentary Arts Programme finds its relevance in the proliferating new media environment, where the form and function of a so-called documentary is evolving out of its well-organized and channelised framework of production and distribution - into much more dynamic, spontaneous sprouting from unforeseen spaces, accessible and authentic; be it immediate, interior and imaginative or extending into the unfolding events of the world.

Anchored in this philosophical and integral approach, the programme offers hands-on training through extensive inputs, interactions and exercises, experiential journeys calling for introspection and observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation and creative expression with one's chosen subject, site and style.

Auroville, an international city, the city of the future, off the Coromandel Coast in South India contrasting with Ladakh, the trans-Himalayan high altitude desert at the Northern frontier, provides a spectrum of spatialities and temporalities. The geo-ecological, the biodiverse, the archaeological, historical, political, socio-cultural and magico-mythical multiverses open up, stimulating new imaginations, cultivating connections, circulating ideas and enabling scholarly and artistic interpretations. Rather than mainstream, the programme offers a multi-stream approach, attempting to push the boundaries, cross the borders, bridge the gaps and thus, empower storytellers from a more expansive territory.

The programme will unfold in 4 modules - over 2 semesters - as follows:

Module-1:	In Ladakh	For 09 weeks:	From 12 Jul to 7 Sept 2025;
Module-2:	In Auroville	For 12 weeks:	From 1 Oct to 7 Dec 2025;
Module-3:	Site of Choice + Home Site	For 12 weeks:	From 8 Dec to 15 Mar 2026;
Module-4:	Production Site + Auroville	For 06 weeks:	From 16 Mar to 30 Apr 2026.

In terms of a worldview and an approach, the **1st Module** in Ladakh will be anchored in a biocentric approach, from a deep ecology perspective, that explores self as deeply connected with and as part of nature, not disassociated with it, rooting an individual in ancient civilization, natural heritage and fragile ecosystem; while the **2nd Module** in Auroville will be anchored in an anthropocentric approach, from a human ecology perspective, that explores an international human settlement with peak population of 3000 - at the center of all decision making processes for the development of a futuristic city as per the gazetted Master Plan Perspective 2025, that will drastically reshape / reconstitute the environment of the entire bioregion.

In terms of pedagogy and practice, the 1st Module will revolve around the understanding of the language of cinema, overviewing key practices that have shaped the history of cinema - specifically documentary; developing perspectives and building foundational skills - the production of short creative documentaries will be the focussed output of module 1; While the 2nd Module will evolve around new media and expanded documentary practices - exploring the potential of the footage, beyond the potential of the film; audiovisual archiving practices; video art, sonic art and other digital practices in contemporary documentary; virtual or in-situ installations utilizing documentary material; also, tangentially exploring social media and advertising with respect to documentary. Thus, production of new media artefacts will be the focussed output of module 2.

The 3rd module will be dedicated to self-directed diploma projects. Mentorship will be extended on project basis- towards ideation and research, pitch development and production planning, production and post production. There will be two project mentors - one internal, assigned by AVFI-HIAL and another external mentor / subject specialist brought on board by the student .

In the 4th module, diploma projects and other productions and ancillary media artefacts completed over the year will be consolidated. Portfolios will be created for each of the works; distribution strategies and forward linkages will be explored; and the student will be well groomed and geared to step out into the world of actualites and encounters with the real.

Weekly student-led study circles will be integrated into the programme, to create space for specific interests of the students. Also, Student Film Festival showcasing thematic curations will be organised, during Module 1 in Ladakh and Module 4 in Auroville.

This being a site-centric course, the exploration of sites will go hand-in-hand with the understanding of the cinematic art and craft. Study tours to a range of sites in Auroville-Pondicherry as well as in Ladakh are integrated in the programme. Sun & Earth Festival at HIAL; and various Auroville orientation activities at AVFI are also included in the programme.

@ HIAL, Ladakh



@ AVFI, Auroville



STUDENT PROFILE:

The programme aims to draw national and international students, having diverse professional backgrounds and interests including: film, art, architecture and design; anthropology and other social sciences. The trans-cultural-disciplinary participation aims at a productive exchange of ideas and insights setting up a diversity and inclusive experience of collective learning. Regional admissions from Auroville bioregion and Ladakh are encouraged.

BASIC QUALIFICATION & SELECTION PROCESS:

The students for this programme will be selected via a 2-tier selection process:

Step1 - Applications will be shortlisted on the basis of 2 main factors:

- (i) Up to 250 words statement of Purpose / motivation to join the programme.
- (ii) General Orientation -not necessarily related to filmmaking; but reflecting specific interests.

Step2 - Online interaction with Shortlisted Applicants.

Final Selected Applicants will be guided to HIAL portal to submit documents, accept terms of participation and pay the fees to register the admission.

Minimum age required to participate in the programme is 18+; No upper age limit.

INFRASTRUCTURE:

This being a site-centric course, prime emphasis will be exposure to a range of sites and facilitating extensive field-work; also facilitating interaction and integration with the local communities. Mobility during organized field visits will be taken care of in Auroville as well as Ladakh. However, mobility required for individual and smaller group exercises is expected to be worked out by respective individuals/groups. A local study station / base camp / classroom - will be available, well equipped with screening facilities. Conference Halls and Auditorium will be available as and when needed in the schedule.

EQUIPMENT:

Students are expected to have their own basic equipment: (i) Camera (ii) Tripod (iii) Sound Recording Device (iv) Editing Laptop. Additional gears are an advantage - however not compulsory. No specific recommendations for the camera models. The editing machine however, should be capable enough to process footage shot from one's own camera, whichever camera one may have. Those willing to purchase new equipment specifically for this programme may consult us.

AVFI - HIAL will have equipment sets; they will be used for demonstrations; they can be issued to the students as back up on special requests - as and when required.

CERTIFICATION:

Diploma Certificate will be issued by HIAL in association with AVFI.



FEES:

For Indian Students : - ₹1,85,000/-

For International Students from Tier 1 Countries:- € 5000/-

For International Students from Tier 2 Countries:- € 3500/-

For International Students from Tier 3 Countries:- € 2000/-

*The fee does not include accommodation. Accommodation charges will be approximately ₹8000/€200 per month in Ladakh and Auroville. Guest Houses in Auroville and Campus Accommodation in Ladakh will be facilitated on twin/triple sharing basis. Those preferring single occupancy can opt for it at a premium. Meals can be opted locally - at basic rates on daily/monthly subscriptions.

FACULTY & COURSE DIRECTION:

The course is conceptualized and curated by Richa Hushing with contributions from Rrivu Laha, Gitanjali J Angmo and Sonam Wangchuk. The Course will be conducted with a faculty pool of documentary arts practitioners and interdisciplinary field experts who will direct specific units and discourses within the modules - with inputs, exercises, interactions and overall mentorship - online as well as onsite.

The main faculty for documentary arts specific discourses include: Avijit Mukul Kishore, Debkamal Ganguly, Koel Sen, Richa Hushing, Rohan Shikumar, Rrivu Laha, Soudhamini and Stanzin Dorjai Gya. Additional faculty will be invited in the programme - with their subject specific inputs as and when required.

The main interdisciplinary field experts and consultants for students' projects and explorations include: Sonam Wangchuk, Padma Shri Morup Namgyal, Rev Elijah Spalbar Gergan, Prof. Tashi Dawa and Viraf Mehta among others from Ladakh; while from Auroville, key experts from the Town Development Council, the forests' and farms' groups, and the residents' assembly. Gitanjali J Angmo will explore students' ideas / endeavors in light of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

QUERIES:

AVFI at info@aurovillefilminstitute.com / +91 9969879319 (Richa) / +91 9500506397 (Rrivu)

HIAL at study@hail.edu.in / +91 8097073592 (Atharva) +91 7051992140 (Dechen)



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