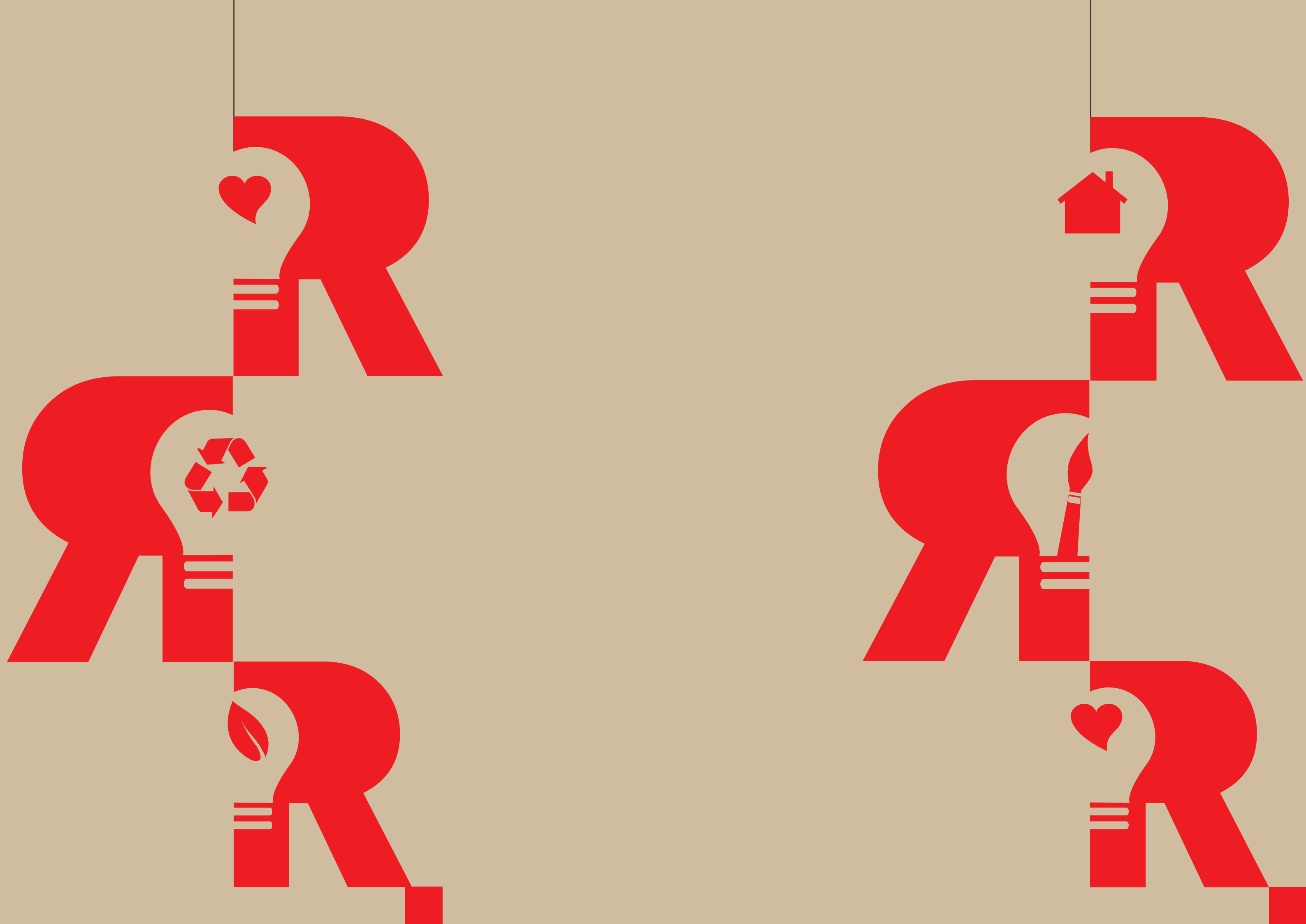


Organised by Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College (Autonomous), Chennai
in collaboration with Lalit Kala Akademi, Regional Centre, Chennai.



**RETHINK
DESIGN** ABSTRACTS
towards **socially responsible** design
international seminar | 28-29 Jan 2010



DAY 1: January 28, 2010

(RE)DESIGN: SUSTAINABILITY

Academic Session I

Sustainable and Fair Design for a Better World

Prabha Nagarajan

Regional Director, India, Organic Exchange; Managing Director, Indigo India

The Story of Salt

Harini Chandrasekar

Creative Director, Therefore Design, Pune

Design Planning and Sustainability

Fatima Ghani

Assistant Professor, Symbiosis Institute of Design, Pune

(RE)THINK: RECYCLE

Academic Session II

Stitching As Style in Afro-Atlantic Art:

Xuly Bët, J.M. Basquiat and Dancehall

Dr Genevieve Hyacinthe

Assistant Professor, Purchase College, State University of New York, USA

Explorations in Recycled Design

Mariona Otero Ibanez

Graphic designer and photographer, Catalonia, Spain

(RE)DESIGN: SUSTAINABILITY

Academic Session I

Sustainable and Fair Design for a Better World

Prabha Nagarajan

Regional Director, India, Organic Exchange; Managing Director, Indigo India

The paper will attempt to give an overview of Certification and Accreditation of Textile Standards in India, Global Eco and Fair Trade Label Standards with special reference to GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standards), OE 100 and OE Blended Standards (Organic Exchange 100 and Organic Exchange Blended Standards), why brands care, and how customers are driving participation in Green and Equitable Design.

The Story of Salt

Harini Chandrasekar

Creative Director, Therefore Design, Pune

Of the total salt produced in the country, Gujarat produces 72%. The people who produce salt in Gujarat largely belong to a community of Kolis who are also referred to as Agariyas. The Agariyas reside in a number of villages surrounding the Little Rann of Kutch that gets flooded every monsoon. The people in the region belong to socially and economically backward castes and communities and are thus compelled to work on salt pans as seasonal laborers in the absence of better income generation opportunities.

The absence of protective gear at work, is giving constant rise to a number of skin-related diseases and also a risk of high blood pressure, which eventually leads to a high mortality rate. Along with the omnipresent harsh climate, due to the geology of the region, the Agariyas are constantly facing adversities that are natural as well as manmade. This paper will follow the story behind developing footwear solutions for the salt pan workers which are not only protective in nature, but also socially, topographically, culturally and economically relevant to the community residing in the Little Rann region of Gujarat.

The following areas will be explored while attempting to grasp the expansive subject of sustainability:

- Difference between Eco-friendly and Sustainability
- Context and Environmental impact using the Salt Case Study
- Relevance and applicability in daily life and how we can in our small way 'be the change we want to see' – Mahatma Gandhi.

Design Planning and Sustainability

Fatima Ghani

Assistant Professor, Symbiosis Institute of Design, Pune

Sustainability is commonly defined as capable of being maintained at a steady level without exhausting natural resources or causing ecological damage. It is also very important to acknowledge that sustainability does not have any absolute value; it is primarily based on two concepts 'needs' and 'limits': the 'needs' comprising of conditions for maintaining an acceptable standard of living for all, and the 'limits' of the capacity of the environment to fulfill the needs of the present and future.

Architecture presents a unique challenge in the field of sustainability. This paper will address and discuss various concepts, issues and strategies of sustainable development from a designer's point of view with the need and ways for public awareness and involvement. Architecture design is a blend of 'environment', 'economy', and 'society', where a balance between these parameters results in a successful design. Green architecture/ environmental architecture/ sustainable architecture/ ecological building etc., are a few terms under immense debate, discussion and application with respect to building design and construction. Construction projects typically consume large amounts of materials and produce tons of waste. In today's global scenario of rapidly depleting natural resources it is the duty and concern of the architect/ designer to address these issues in terms of sustainable development. Design being a multi-disciplinary field, these issues are addressed on a broad spectrum. Public involvement and awareness is equally important for a successful development in terms of design, planning and sustainability. For example, if the builders/ society give some benefits/ schemes to the residents to opt for various green measures or use renewable energy resources, and so on, they will also be directly committed and responsible for the smooth and efficient running of desired systems.

(RE)THINK: RECYCLE

Academic Session II

Stitching As Style in Afro-Atlantic Art:
Xuly Bèt, J.M. Basquiat and Dancehall

Dr Genevieve Hyacinthe

Assistant Professor, Purchase College, State University of New York, USA

Stitching as rendered in fashion, paint, and sculpture is a vital Afro-Atlantic process by which fragments may be recuperated and redesigned anew. Stitching as an aesthetic of sustainability is considered in the works of Malian designer, Xuly Bèt, the painter, Jean Michel Basquiat, and in traditional and pop cultural forms from West Africa and the Caribbean. Sustainability in this case is a multivalent concept referring to among other things, ecology, cultural and spiritual entities. The recycling of materials is an act of everyday life in which everything at hand is exploited for the establishment of individual and communal harmony and longevity. These materials, having had previous uses or lives are also objects of potentially great spiritual import. From this point of view, the ability of these artists to handle these elements with grace, efficiency and power can be viewed as an act of utility and divination. So prevalent is the aesthetic of reuse in the Afro-Atlantic diaspora, that it can be seen as an aesthetic of beauty and mastery in the face of things new and unworked, unmastered, without spiritual complexity. The stitching process that is exploited by Bèt, Basquiat and such everyday artists as Dancehall performers, among others, is a trace of the artist’s hand; a hand that cultivates the continuation of life through the reuse of its detritus and a hand that is connected to the divine.

Explorations in Recycled Design

Mariona Otero Ibanez

Graphic designer and photographer, Catalonia, Spain

With the recent inconclusive Copenhagen Climate Summit and the alarming 41,000 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions that it generated, green design and design using recycled materials take on an all important role. I will present two products that I have been working on during my stay in Manchester, UK and will share my experiences in conducting workshops related to recycled design in Chennai.

Tiecycle: Europe has a safety rule that all cyclists must wear reflective material at night, in order to increase the visibility of the rider and reduce accidents. On surveying the market I found that existing products (hi-vis coats) were of use only during the night and hence decided to come up with an adaptable design that would be practical and useful to cycle in during the day and night. I came up with the idea of re-using and modifying a tie for my new invention. This item has been produced in a ‘cottage industry’ scenario.

Brollymap: This design was inspired by my travels across Northern Europe in bad weather conditions where a visitor has to juggle an umbrella and a tourist map at the same time. With the Brollymap I have combined the two items together. My idea was to print the city maps on the inside surface of the umbrella. This way, tourists who carry the umbrella just have to look up and see the maps in order to read them. The city maps had to be graphically re-designed to be easily read from a certain distance, and to fit around the umbrella frame. The brollymap also doubles as an ideal souvenir and is kinder on the environment as it considerably reduces the need for paper maps. This is a work in progress and I am being represented by an agent who will pitch it to the organizers of the London Olympics 2012.

DAY 2: January 29, 2010

(RE)THINK: ETHICS

Academic Session III

Responsible Encounters with Artisans: Code of Conduct for 'Craft Documentation'

Dr. Skye Morrison

Folklorist, Textile Scholar and Activist
Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Fine Arts, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

Integrating the Understanding of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) to Core Curriculum in Design Education

Anupam Jain

Professor, Design, National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi

Problematizing Design Intervention: Case Study of Kanchipuram Weavers

Mallika Madhavan

Assistant Professor, Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, Chennai

(RE)DESIGN: CRAFT PRACTICES

Academic Session IV

Sustainable Design in Craft Revival and Livelihood: Case Study of the Kottan, the Traditional Basketry of Chettinad

Visalakshi Ramaswamy

Founder Trustee, M.Rm.Rm. Foundation, Chennai

Dyes used in the Textiles of North East India

Priti C. Nartiang

Research Scholar, Viswabharati, Santiniketan; Teacher, Patha Bhavan School, Santiniketan

Designation of Terracotta: Community Design

Baishali Ghosh

Department of Fine Arts, University of Hyderabad

(RE)THINK (RE) DESIGN: EDUCATION

Academic Session V

Barrier-free Education: SLATE

Arathi Abraham

Creative Director, 99&1 Design, Chennai

Educational Design:

Making Learning a Thoughtful, Fun and Lifelong Journey

Srivi Kalyan

Director-Founder, Fooniferse: a Loony Arts Universe

Mutually Inspiring Practice: Service Learning Experience

Sandhya Krishna, Amrutha Lahari Chevuturi et al

Postgraduate Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, Chennai

Transcending Boundaries: Art Camp at Shembaganur, Kodai Hills

R Shradha, Swapnil Midha et al

Undergraduate Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, Chennai

(RE)THINK: ETHICS

Academic Session III

Responsible Encounters with Artisans:
Code of Conduct for ‘Craft Documentation’

Dr. Skye Morrison

Folklorist, Textile Scholar and Activist
Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Fine Arts, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

Several Indian Design Institutes have ‘craft documentation’ as part of their curriculum. Design students, predominantly from urban institutes, are sent to artisan’s communities to record traditional craftspeople. The design students come back from the field and create attractive visual documents of their experiences for their Institutes. These documents lack written content including any form of analysis. How does the artisan benefit from this encounter? Why is the student not required to return to the artisan’s community to present their findings? What are the ethical and social responsibilities of the Institutions who are sending these students to the field? How can this activity be enhanced to acknowledge the artisan’s needs and reciprocal relationships with student designers?

Based on fifteen years of active fieldwork in material culture in India, this critique recommends rethinking the activity of ‘craft documentation’ to include core values, sensitive behaviors and proper academic writing for student researchers in order to enrich their experience. While observing in the field, students could be contributing to the artisans’ knowledge of markets and design. The paper addresses the need for writing research based on responsible academic models rather than ‘Google, cut and paste.’ The student experience of traditional craft practice should give artisans’ the recognition they deserve. Craft documentation must facilitate the artisan’s access to contemporary design.

Integrating the Understanding of Intellectual Property
Rights (IPR) to Core Curriculum in Design Education

Anupam Jain

Professor, Design, National Institute of Fashion Technology, New Delhi

Design educators encourage innovation and creativity through hands on projects and case studies. Using this methodology, the design solutions reached are both socially useful and commercially viable. From the design process, there arise questions about designers’, artisans’ and clients’ Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). This paper examines a way to include the issues of IPR and the underlying values in hands-on design curriculum in order to provide security, stimulation, incentives and core values in design solutions.

The understanding of IPR as a legal system in Indian society is necessary for design students, faculty and professionals. Everyone needs to know whose ideas they are using and to give credit where credit is due. Based on the research of twenty Design Institutes in India, with UG and PG levels, IPR information is presented to students as a separate subject only in one institute, NIFT.

My proposal is that Design Institutes should incorporate IPR inclusive course structures because they communicate the core values, ethics, morality, ownership rights and social responsibility to the students when they are actively engaged in hands-on design work. IPR will become a part of the design process with case studies that demonstrate effective advocacy, as well as, exploitative advantage taken in the cases of designers and artisans.

After understanding case studies, students will be asked to investigate their own examples and add to research documentation of IPR in India. The result will benefit India, in terms of its preservation of traditional knowledge as well as its leadership in terms of young designers who practice innovative design with complete insight of IPR.

Problematising Design Intervention:
Case Study of Kanchipuram Weavers

Mallika Madhavan

Assistant Professor, Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, Chennai

The rich and aesthetically unique weaving tradition of Kanchipuram silks that is 400 years old has been facing a slowdown for quite some time now. Conversations with weavers, manufacturers and dealers reveal pessimism from all quarters. The weavers do not wish their children to continue with the weaving tradition. Odd jobs offered by textile showrooms, wedding contractors and industrial enterprises that have mushroomed in the vicinity lure the youngsters. The textile dealers on the other hand opine that the younger generation must get involved if this rich heritage has to be preserved.

The problems caused by the changing socio-economic, cultural structures, and the altered lifestyle that they have engendered, have also contributed to the present scenario. Their very identity is threatened and seems to locate the weaver in the periphery of survival. The paper will foreground the problems faced by the community of weavers.

The paper proposes to analyze the situation wherein the textile dealers and other government and non-government agencies have a role to play. What has been the impact of design intervention? While it has opened new marketing opportunities, has it contributed to the respectability and sustenance of the artisans? How have the government policies and schemes helped them? Have they brought about a social and economic change to the artisan community? It examines possibilities of more meaningful engagement between the artisans and business enterprises by projecting successful models vis-à-vis the unrealized ones.

(RE)DESIGN: CRAFT PRACTICES

Academic Session IV

Sustainable Design in Craft Revival and Livelihood: Case Study of the Kottan, the Traditional Basketry of Chettinad

Visalakshi Ramaswamy

Founder Trustee, M.Rm.Rm. Foundation, Chennai

The paper examines the need for craft revival in India and the role played by non-governmental organizations in the revival process. Taking the handicrafts of the Chettinad region of Southern Tamil Nadu as case studies, the paper analyses the role played by design, marketing and commitment to the cause of handicrafts in the revival process. It puts forth the experiences of the M.Rm.Rm Cultural Foundation and its work in Chettinad since its inception in the year 2000. Through the case studies, the paper highlights the all important role played by craft practitioners to create and develop a sustainable craft business. It further stresses the need to provide employment to craftspersons in their native villages/towns in order to keep the craft alive, to resuscitate the geographic and indigenous sanctity of handicrafts and also restore to the craft community, the dignity and self-respect they acquire from being masters of their craft.

Dyes used in the Textiles of North East India

Priti C. Nartiang

Research Scholar, Viswabharati, Santiniketan
Teacher, Patha Bhavan School, Santiniketan

North East India has a rich and unique cultural identity. The people of these states are expert weavers and their traditional attire is proof of their taste and dress sense. Over a period of time their dresses have been institutionalized and there are different dresses for different occasions and each of them has its own sanctity and code. All the dresses which they use have been traditionally hand woven. The handlooms used here, although indigenous, have some traits seen elsewhere, as in Africa and Asia. The silk which is produced here is one of the best in the world.

This paper discusses the dyes used by these tribes in the handloom industry. The north-eastern region has various types of vegetable dyes which are not only environment-friendly, but also people friendly, as they has been seen to have no negative effect on the person. This paper will try go back to the work and the know-how of the earlier generations. They attached taboos for certain colors. They practically saw the effects certain colors had on the health of the dyers especially red. Color fastness was ensured using plant sources. During my research work and field study I have realized that we have failed to learn from these tribes who have so much to teach us. Through this seminar one needs to vouch and lend our voice for what they have done and are still doing.

Designation of Terracotta: Community Design

Baishali Ghosh

Department of Fine Arts, University of Hyderabad

The 'Terracotta temple' marks the regional identity of West Bengal State. A brick temple designed in vernacular architectural form with terracotta plaques is commonly recognized as the 'terracotta temple' of West Bengal. The Bengali community constructed such terracotta temples in the community congregational areas or as a design policy of inscribing Bengali identity in residential premises outside West Bengal (Kali temple in Chittoranjn Park, New Delhi). The Bengali community also designs non-permanent architectural structures like pandals for festivals in different materials, which resemble the 'terracotta temple'. This paper traces the various trajectories of terracotta temple design policy in contemporary India.

The paper has three sections. The first section discusses how terracotta as an eco-friendly medium was adopted for temple design in order to sustain and adjust to the climate of the region. The second section argues how over a period the choice of terracotta underwent various shifts that reflected the design sense of the community. For example, other mediums such as plaster, cement etc., replaced terracotta and were painted to retain the terracotta look in the design. The third section addresses the discourse between production design and class consciousness, using terracotta temple designs as examples.

(RE)THINK (RE) DESIGN: EDUCATION

Academic Session V

Barrier-free Education: SLATE

Arathi Abraham

Creative Director, 99&1 Design, Chennai

Designing for niche markets almost always implies high-end products. So, do affordable designs for small user groups make sense for designers? Does the obvious financial non viability of the exercise ensure that we turn our backs on these gaps?

Thoughtful design for disability has in many, many cases ended up being useful in the mainstream context. How many of us remember that the invention of the telephone was a byproduct of attempts to invent a hearing aid? Or that eye glasses are actually assistive devices that are now a fashion statement?

SLATE is software that was originally designed as a low-cost tool to create communication aids for children with cerebral palsy in a school in Chennai. It has now grown to include education, literacy and communication requirements of all primary school children – in mainstream as well a special schools.

Educational Design: Making Learning a Thoughtful, Fun and Lifelong Journey

Srivi Kalyan

Director-Founder, Fooniferse: a Loony Arts Universe

Designers play an important role in the area of education. However, educational design as a field is still growing and the need for training designers to think in the field of education and educators to think in the field of design is still grossly underestimated. Some of the key challenges of working in the area of educational design in a country like India are to keep in mind the diversity, the economic challenges of creating products and low literacy levels. However, education provides a space to work with the next generation in areas of human values, leadership, globalization, environment, self-awareness and culture. Hence it becomes essential for designers to innovate and create learning materials, educational products, curriculum/ learning designs that will provide learners with challenging, inspirational and meaningful learning experiences.

This paper looks at the role of content and design in making learning a thoughtful, fun and lifelong journey and approaches the role of the designer as an educational activist.

Mutually Inspiring Practice: Service Learning Experience

Sandhya Krishna, Amrutha Lahari Chevuturi et al

Postgraduate Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, Chennai

‘Service combined with learning adds value to each and transforms both’.
Honnet and Poulsen

As the name implies, Service Learning is a unique method of learning through service that enables a two-way learning process. It goes beyond charity and volunteerism. It encourages asking the hard questions to learn about the big picture and search for the real solutions. It serves as a podium to share and develop through active participation in any thoughtfully organized service, integrating and enhancing the academic curriculum. This paper projects the Service Learning experience of a class of 12 postgraduate students of the Department of Fine Arts. They visited a village near Medavakkam, Chennai for six Saturdays, dividing themselves into two major groups based on their postgraduate specialization. The groups worked with 30 women and children and developed handcrafted products. The gratifying program led the students to understand the process of function and responsibility in design. The Medavakkam participants benefited from these classes by becoming more independent, as their products are now sold at a design store in Chennai. They were also sensitized to the needs of protecting and cleaning their immediate environment.

Transcending Boundaries: Art Camp at Shembaganur, Kodai hills

R Shradha, Swapnil Midha et al

Undergraduate Department of Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, Chennai

The paper focuses on the experiences of the five-day art camp at Shembaganur, Kodai hills of Tamil Nadu, which in essence demonstrated that art, craft and design transcend linguistic, social and cultural boundaries.

The basic idea behind the project was to harness aesthetic skills, and nurture confidence in 45 young school-going girls, aged between 11 and 18 from tribal and minority communities of the locality. Eleven student volunteers of III BA Fine Arts, Stella Maris College, Chennai, participated in the camp as facilitators. It was a mutual learning process for both the groups. These volunteers obtained an insight into the minutiae of teaching craft-skills, honed their communication skills, and some non-Tamil students developed sensitivity to the vernacular language. It almost turned out to be an extension of the service learning course that was part of the curriculum in the college.