



KALA RAKSHA
Preservation of Traditional Arts

KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA INITIATES COLLABORATION WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DESIGN



KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA PROJECT REPORT 27 MAY- 25 AUGUST 2011

Since its inception, Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya has enjoyed inputs from the National Institute of Design. This year, we realized a small dream when for the first time NID students collaborated with KRV students in the fifth course, **Finishing and Collection Development**. This course is perhaps the most complex in our curriculum, as the artisan students collaborate with urban design students. The twist is that instead of the usual relationship of urban students getting artisans to do their work, at KRV the artisan designers "hire" the urban students to help them with product design. The course was unusual this year in that NID took it as a classroom project; so twelve NID students collaborated with the KRV students, on a one-to one basis.

Athira: *"It was a give and take relationship; we learned from each others' work."*

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YEAR SIX AT KALA RAKSHA VIDHYALAYA

By now the students of Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya's 6th year have completed five of six courses. During this period, the women completed Course Four- **Concept, Communication, Projects.**



LOkesh Ghai, KRV veteran, taught the course. He used a current fashion forecast as a Rorschach test, having the artisans each choose one they liked and interpret it with her own experience. RAW ENERGY was interpreted as the surprise of a solar eclipse. SOUL became local toys. SENSING MATTER became understanding manner (in making things) And MANIFESTO was reinterpreted as the art of the traditional line. LOkesh made imaginative use of local field trips, taking the artisans to see potters working, ship building, and toy making. The trips infused the themes with meaning and enthused the artisans. As an added bonus, Miraben, a patchwork artisan, visited KRV graduate Shakil's batik workshop and chose the fabrics for her theme. This was an important step in encouraging the women to fully responsible for their work.



The fifth class, **Finishing and Collection Development**, was held in July. LOkesh Ghai taught this class as well. The NID and KRV students became acquainted by learning finishing techniques, including hand detailing taught by KRV women graduates. Then they paired in teams of KRV-NID students, and brainstormed about KRV final collections.



In the second half of the course, the NID and KRV teams of students developed concepts. The NID students provided a range of possible products and the KRV students made final choices. With the help of Kala Raksha master tailor Rameshbhai, and input from NID Faculty Sanjay Guria they produced test fits and patterns. Surprisingly, home furnishings proved to be more challenging than garments. A trip to the nearby Rabari village Tunda Vandh yielded inspirations for some exciting new home ideas.

Dhanjibhai: *"Sumegha made ten variations of a product, so I had more opportunity to play with motifs and layout."*

Sumegha: *"Dhanjibhai was very open to new products, and his knowledge of weaving helps us find solutions to what might be a craft limitation."*

Hansrajibhai: *"When I did not understand what Athira said, she showed me with drawing and I immediately understood."*



The women's session was taught by Shweta Dhariwal, also a veteran KRV visiting faculty member. With President Miraben setting the example, this year's women's group was unprecedentedly diligent, working into the night on developing concepts, patterns, and layouts. Enjoying a one-to-one relationship did not ease the pace for the NID students either. Instead, they raised the bar for product development.



The final presentation was juried by Sonal Chauhan, faculty from NID, KRV visiting faculty LOKesh Ghai, and designer Ishan Khosla from Delhi. Critiques were aimed to bring the collections to excellence and additionally improve KRV education. Instilling responsibility for one's collection still remains a challenge, but it was interesting to note that this pertains to NID students as well as those of KRV!

Tulsiben- *"Deviyani helped me a lot. I learned about pattern making."*

Lakshmiben- *"I really enjoyed working with Garima. I could not have dreamed of creating garments!"*

INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The NID collaboration was an important pilot. It provided an opportunity to bring theory into practical application, and to experiment with how students can work together in new ways. Most important, it was a chance to experience how Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya can work with the National Institute of Design. The NID students were daunted at first by the rural campus. We realized too that they need more background on the craft traditions with which they will work, and next year, we will insure that they make use of the Kala Raksha museum for inspiration. By the end, the urban students voluntarily stayed on the KRV campus an extra night. We trust this bodes well for our future and plan to meet with NID to discuss further collaborations in September.



KRV has developed a plan to become more financially self sustaining. Included are an annual major fund raising event abroad, workshops for international students and visitors, and the development and sale of educational materials, publications and films. Happily, during this period we received positive responses for all of these activities. Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya has been booked for an exhibition at the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising, Colorado State University, USA for autumn 2013. This will give us ample time to develop a plan that includes sales of Artisan Designed products along with

the exhibition. Workshops are scheduled for a class of students from Oregon State University in December, a group from Austria in February, and two individuals in November. In July we were informed that a long time funder will support the development of educational materials, which we plan to sell for revenue, and in addition will fund a pilot program to develop a system of offering royalties for artisan designs.

ALUMNI AND OUTREACH

This year, two KRV graduates, Sohel Khatri (2008) and Chaman Siju (2006) were accepted into the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market. Very unfortunately, neither artisan was granted a visa to attend the show. However, the Market accommodated them by providing staff to operate their booths, so KRV alumni had a presence at the show, and the public response was very good. Several graduates recently attended an exhibition held in Surat, where their design development was specifically commended.

KRV women graduates have been involved in several design projects. A group of Rabari women have created a series of narrative works depicting their memoirs of traditional life, and the rapid changes they have experienced. This will be shown along with the work of seventy Italian art students from the Art Institute of Trento from January 2012 for three months.

The Sumrasar suf and patchwork graduates are developing products to supplement their lively exhibition of textile illustrations of Gujarati sayings, which will be shown at the Artists Center, Mumbai from 19-25 September. Kala Raksha plans to publish a book of the works. Work on the project has taken longer than expected, so the first edition should be ready early next year. In addition, this group of artisans recently developed samples for an international company, and succeeded in earning the increased wages that they desired.

In May, the third group of Kala Raksha Artisan Designer interns made a collection of stunning Art to Wear jackets for the American market. The collection was purchased by the Peabody Essex Museum shop in Salem, Massachusetts in June. In August, the interns studied the Kala Raksha Museum collections and began creating a collection of museum inspired purses, bags, cushion covers and table runners for application to the 2012 Santa Fe International Folk Art Market. We anticipate a super collection.

Also in August, three young suf embroidery graduates began a collection of garments for the November KRV Convocation fashion show. Their designs will be the basis of the Kala Raksha fall-winter collection. Thus, our dream of artisans driving Kala Raksha design has taken another major step forward.

Artisan Design Online

Find Kala Raksha Artisan Designed work online at www.equalcraft.com

Articles on Artisan Design have been published in three important online craft journals: **Hand/Eye** www.handeyemagazine.com 3 February 2010; **Craft Unbound** www.craftunbound.net 27 January 2011, and the **Craft Revival Trust Newsletter** www.craftrevival.org vol 110, issue 2 Winter-Spring 2011.

Kala Raksha is now on Facebook. And join a discussion on issues of craft and design on our blog <http://www.kala-raksha-blog.org/>

VISITORS

Through heat and rain, and despite our rural location, visitors reach Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya. During this period, we enjoyed useful inputs from NID faculty Sanjay Guria, and Sonal Chauhan, Delhi designer Ishan Khosla, and Christine De Baan, Programme Director, and Jeanne Tan, Project Manager of Dutch Design Fashion and Architecture.

THANKS TO GLOBAL GIVING!

KRV succeeded in raising the funds to cover the academic year of 2010! The Indian financial year spans between April 2010 and March 2011, and our sixth year of classes is nearly halfway done. To date we have received RS 737,233 (\$ 17,145) with pledges for RS 462,500 (\$ 10,755) This is nearly half of our need for the current financial year.

KRV relies entirely on donations. 9% of 2010's funding was individual donations—equivalent to over four scholarships. Global Giving has made a substantial contribution. As one donor wrote, **“The Global giving website is easy to navigate. It makes giving so much easier.”**

Your generous contribution can help! You can make a difference in the lives of our very creative constituency!!



Miraben- *"When we go outside, look, pick the materials ourselves, we can express any theme."*

Aziz- *"What I knew before was 10%. What I learned at KRV was 90%!"*

Dayalalbhai- *"I have worked with designers for 20 years, but when you do your own designs, it is something altogether different."*

THE NEXT PHASE

Sustainability is still our challenge. In just the last three months we have begun to meet it. Our program for entrepreneurial activities to enable the institute to become more self supporting is taking form. Response has been encouraging, and activities have reached to planning stage.

Financial sustainability is always a huge challenge for an educational institution. We welcome any entrepreneurial ideas –and ideas for increasing visibility–from our supporters.