



KALA RAKSHA
Preservation of Traditional Arts

KR MUSEUM ACCESSIONS MAJOR COLLECTION WITH DONATIONS FROM GLOBAL GIVING!

KALA RAKSHA MUSEUM PROJECT REPORT 11 DECEMBER 2010- 2 APRIL 2011



“We would forget these things if not for the Museum,” Khetuben Rana, Artisan

CONTENTS

THE KALA RAKSHA MUSEUM IN ACTION	2
VISITORS AND RESEARCHERS.....	5
ADDITIONS TO COLLECTIONS	5
INNOVATION: RE-PURPOSE, RE-INVENT, RE-CYCLE	7
RENOVATION OF EXHIBITION GALLERY	8
THANKS TO GLOBAL GIVING!	8
THE NEXT PHASE	9

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THE KALA RAKSHA MUSEUM IN ACTION

Since its inception, Kala Raksha has dovetailed the collection and preservation of traditional pieces with income generation. The Trust established an international quality Museum of textiles and related materials in 1997. Two features of this Museum make it unique. First, the Museum is based in the village itself. Artisans have access to and responsibility for it. Second, artisans were involved in all phases of the development of the Museum. They assisted in collection, were engaged in documentation, and consulted in the permanent exhibition. The Kala Raksha Museum successfully proves the mutual benefits of involving communities in presenting and utilizing their own cultures.

The Museum is intended as a resource base for artisans, designers and researchers. One aim is to revitalize traditions in contemporary ways through the museum's inspiration. During this period, 17 Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya artisan design students, 2 National Institute of Fashion Technology students, 5 professional designers, and 30 Kala Raksha Artisans actively utilized our collections to develop craft products with cultural integrity.



Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya began its course in design for traditional artisans with a field trip to the Kala Raksha Museum. The course encourages artisans to innovate within their traditions; for that, recognizing and supporting the unique features of those traditions is key. The opportunity to examine original pieces becomes more important with time. Even in five years, we have seen that young artisans no longer have access to traditions.

“I have been with KR so many years but this was a new experience,” Miraben.



One unique feature of the school is that young and older artisans study together. The visit to the museum is a catalyst for elders to explain the traditions. In the men's colour class this year, we combined a discussion with master artisans and the museum field trip for the first time. As the students were examining textiles in the museum, the elders arrived. They listened to the discussion.

“We should take this course, too!” Dr. Ismail Khatri KRV Advisor.



Continuing with our museum mobilization program, sponsored by the Government of India Development Commissioner Handicrafts, in February we held the final workshop to develop products inspired by the museum collections. Ninoshka Alvares, a Mumbai based professional designer, conducted the workshop in the Kala Raksha Museum. Thirty artisans from three ethnic communities worked on garments and accessories that combined patterns that Ninoshka developed from museum objects and the artisans own motifs created during their studies at the Vidhyalaya.



Serendipitously, no sooner was the workshop over than Kala Raksha was invited to participate in the Ahmedabad Fashion week on 14 February. Although the lead time was just a week, we happened to be ready. As only can happen in India, we got the new products and an artisan designer to the ramp in time to steal the show!

“Kala Raksha’s was the best collection this year!” Prateek, Senior Designer
Hutheesingh Designs.



The Museum brought a few unexpected benefits to interns in the last few months. Craig Delphine, pattern maker from Australia came to help Kala Raksha solve the problem of sizing of garments once and for all. To everyone's amazement, there seem to be no standard sizes so far in India. After pondering the situation and trying as many angles as we could think of, Craig finally went to the museum. Studying the traditional garments there, he realized that in Indian garment construction, fitting was achieved in simple, straight cuts. This changed his entire strategy for sizing. He went on to teach pattern making to the Kala Raksha tailoring team.

In a second project, National Institute of Fashion Technology intern Smita Srivastava was getting stuck in designing recycled quilts for her diploma project. Her designs were too complicated to be sustainably produced by local artisans. A study of traditional quilts in the Kala Raksha Museum collections gave her the direction she needed to design appropriate to artisans and market.




As the final touches were put on this report, we began the third group of Kala Raksha Artisan Designer interns, who studied some of the new books in the library and our permanent collections to begin a collection of Art to Wear jackets for the Surface Design Association meetings in Minneapolis in June 2011.

“We are not inspired til we see the fabric and threads!” Lakhiben, Kala Raksha Design Intern.

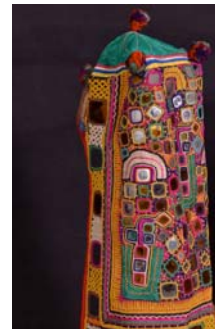
VISITORS AND RESEARCHERS

The end of the winter visitor season brought a variety of visitors to Kala Raksha. After last November's visit from Creative Scotland's 10 curators, Deborah May, daughter of one of the curators, spent ten days at Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya. We introduced our museum and its activities to groups from Colorado State University and Kansas State University, and Austria, as part of workshops in traditional crafts. Jane McKeating, Director of Studies, Dept. of Design, Manchester Metropolitan University came to do research for a book on hand embroidery. She much appreciated the opportunity to browse the museum. Dr. Kevin Murray, professor, editor of **Craft Unbound**, and independent curator, came to discuss development of a code to assist craft collaborations that bridge the city and the village. This code will include basic ethical standards, complementing the Fair Trade system, as well as productive schemes for adding value through storied content. Early development will be conducted in association with Shop for Change. Academic visitors also included Liz Williamson, Head of School of Design, UNSW, Christine LoFaso, Professor, School of Art, Northern Illinois U. Textile artists Russ Mason of Toronto, Sheila Klein of Seattle, and Meghna Singh sponsored by Motiroti UK, spent time looking at our collections. Ashoka Foundation's Devashri Mukherjee and Janet Visick visited Kala Raksha Center and Museum. In March, we hosted the textile students from the National Institute of Fashion technology in Gandhinagar and 40 students from Royal College of Art, UK. In addition, numerous student and tourist groups visited the museum. Although we do not yet have a way of tracking visitors to our online museum, we have received many compliments on the site.

	Sinha, Anil	<u>Ideating Identity</u>
	Cousin, Francoise	<u>Blouses Broidee du Kutch</u>
	Mathew, Deepak John	<u>Principles of Design through Photography</u>
		<u>Grass to Gold: Jewellery Through the Ages</u>
		<u>Sui Dhaga: Embroidery in Asia</u>
	Dale, Julie Schafner	<u>Art to Wear</u>
	Sabnani, Nina	<u>Stitching Stories: The Art of Embroidery in Gujarat</u>

ADDITIONS TO COLLECTIONS

The most exciting activity of this period was additions to our collections, made possible by generous donations. With the donation from a November visitor, in January Kala Raksha had a large library cabinet custom made for our Museum. This doubles our book storage capacity, and we eagerly added seven new books on textiles and design, including ***Sui Dhaga: Embroidery in Asia***, which has a chapter on Rabari concepts of design written by Judy Frater.



With Global Giving's Bonus Day on 16 March, 2011, Kala Raksha received \$650, which was matched with \$150. Added to an earlier match of \$500 and a donation of \$25, Kala Raksha received a total of \$1,325 for our Museum. With these funds we were able to accession 49 new objects! From the objects which have been short listed for the Museum, we chose three collections: 19 embroideries from eastern Kutch, 18 Rabari embroideries, and 12 objects for our second online exhibition on recycling. All were professionally photographed, labeled and archivally housed.

The eastern Kutch collection will be particularly useful in a documentation Kala Raksha is conducting on embroideries from that region. The Rabari collection adds to one of the strengths on the Kala Raksha collections. The 12 objects selected to enhance our second online exhibition complete a wish expressed in previous reports. This show will coincide with Earth Day, and an exhibition at The Textile Museum in Washington, D.C.: *Second Lives: The Age-Old Art of Recycling Textiles* (www.textilemuseum.org). The online exhibition will open on 15 April 2011. Following is a preview:



INNOVATION: RE-PURPOSE, RE-INVENT, RE-CYCLE

Recycling is a very old idea. And India could well be the home of recycling. In India, nothing is thrown away. It is used again, and again, repurposed, reinvented, until finally the last bit of spirit floats away. Everything seems to be in a constant, flowing state of recycling. The motivation is a deep conviction to sustainability. The impressive aspect of the system is a sense of awareness and value for everything, and the ability to see things familiar as potentially something else.

The world of art offers a special manifestation of value as catalyst for re-invention. Women artisans of Kutch have always highly valued the creativity and hard work of their embroideries—so much so, that they invest time and effort in prolonging the lives of much loved objects.

In this exhibition we show five ways in which textile artists creatively innovate to give their work longevity.



RENOVATION OF EXHIBITION GALLERY

Renovation of the Museum Exhibition Gallery is moving steadily along. In March, National Institute of Design exhibition designer Mayank Loonker visited the site to initiate the final stage. The gallery was painted, bringing with it the opportunity to paint the entire campus for the first time since it was built in 1997. Water proofing of the roofs was an added bonus. Mayank has sent proofs for the first of the exhibition panels. With a few minor adjustments, the text panels will soon be ready. Objects will be re-mounted—including creating life sized dolls and a life sized camel. We will add an LCD screen to enable interactive programs in the gallery as well.

THANKS TO GLOBAL GIVING!

Kala Raksha Trust is self sustaining in its income generation work- a feat not even attempted by many non-profits. However, the earnings from our income generation can not cover the costs of expansion of The Kala Raksha Museum, which is the core of our sustainable, authentic work. Generous donations from our supporters enable us to add to our collections, and host projects that utilize our rich resource.

Global Giving has enabled us to realize our first goal in expanding our collections and installing our second virtual exhibition! We thank Global Giving donors for your support, and welcome financial contributions as well as ideas for ways to reach out and share our holdings with interested people.

“The Global giving website is easy to navigate. It makes giving so much easier,”
Maryann Sadagopan, Global Giving donor.



THE NEXT PHASE

We look forward to developing our Art to Wear collection, with inspiration from our collections. We are also excited to conduct the final phase of documentation of Kutch embroidery traditions and begin editing our documentation for publication with a highly respected publisher. \$795 would enable the final research to be carried out.

Two more small collections of objects have been identified for accession: an additional collection of Eastern Kutch embroidery, and a collection of women's blouses. These are valued at RS 16,650 (\$378) and RS 18,700 (\$425) respectively.